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**CHURCH HISTORY**

From the Resurrection to Vatican II

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## I. BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

Peter and John ran. Magdalene had given the anguished announcement that she had found the tomb of Jesus empty. John, the youngest, arrived first, but Peter had left before him and went ahead of him: he rushed into the empty tomb and from the carefully folded shroud argued that it could not be a theft.

Peter is the disciple who runs. The mere sight of Jesus sets his heart in motion, his word 1st launches. It happens to him to misunderstand, to make mistakes and to repent. He also regrets having had courage and denies his beloved Jesus, then repents of his fear and cries.

Simon, known as Peter, is a burning but crumbly stone that is easily demolished, yet Jesus chooses him and does not choose the tax collector and exact Matthew, not the thoughtful Thomas, not the luminous John.

To found and direct his Church, Jesus chooses the ardor of the heart. The rest will be done by the Holy Spirit, who at the near Jewish Pentecost will find gathered in the Upper Room the one hundred and twenty, including the apostles, the disciples, and Mary with the women.

The Church was born in this way by the will of her Founder, rooted in the "rock" of love: there is no place for hypocrisy and betrayal. The traitor did not endure in the time of trial, He's dead outside the Church. And it is replaced, because 1st Church cannot be mutilated. The names of those chosen by the meeting were two, Matthias and Barnabas, and perhaps the assembled would have elected Barnabas, "good and filled with the Holy Spirit" but they left the election to God and after praying they cast lots: Matthias came out.

The apostles and disciples had entered the Upper Room timid, they came out impetuous and overwhelming (and were believed to be drunk) by the sudden power they had received.

They immediately began to speak to the great crowd gathered in the capital from all parts of the religious and political world who had Jerusalem for their guide, and each one heard them speak, amazed, in his own language: the Jewish Pentecost had become the first Christian Pentecost.

The Church is born by spreading the word of God and will live by His word: she will be beaten and scourged, but no one will have the power to take away her word.

The most impetuous is Peter, the first disciple who became a teacher of truth: "Jewish men, and all of you who are in Jerusalem, who have come from every part of the world, all of you 'listen to my words'.

On that first day of preaching Peter baptized three thousand listeners, and that success constituted the first bond that did not allow the apostles to "go" once to evangelize the land: a nascent community needs to be consolidated, it asks for caring care, and the apostles stopped at that first time in Jerusalem.

The Church was born as a community, not only in spirit, but in goods: the baptized who sold their property put everything in common, then, when the community is too large to be able to put and keep their possessions in a single family, this tendency will remain in its spirit, from which the whole civilized world will draw reason and incitement to a just distribution and redistribution of wealth.

Mary is the only one who did not need to be transformed into the Upper Room, but the flame of the Holy Spirit also rested on her forehead, as if to confirm God's pleasure in the "Full of Grace". And Mary leaves the Upper Room full of anxious joy at the sight of the first assembly of the faithful (Church means Assembly, union of the faithful), the first fruits of the passion and death of her Son and the beginning of her universal and perennial motherhood.

## II . THE CHURCH GROWS

The sick who could not find a place under Solomon's portico were made to lie down in the sun, in the square, with the hope that Peter would pass near them and his shadow would touch them; it was a shadow that healed because it was brighter than the light created by the sun, it was the shadow of those who brought the uncreated light of Grace.

Jerusalem was walking in the footsteps of the twelve Galileans, and in a few days the baptized were already five thousand. The faithful tasted a new joy, that of praying together, of "breaking the bread" in memory of Jesus and of sharing it as a sign of brotherhood: the Eucharist was already the sign of the unity of the body of the Church.

It was an impetuous growth, but all healthy growth costs suffering, and the Church could not grow in the triumph of success. The first healing that Peter wrought in the name of Jesus, that of the cripple, procures the first arrest for the twelve and, for Peter and John, the most prominent, the first appearance in court.

Peter immediately takes advantage of this to harangue and judge the judges with one of his impetuous testimonies to the truth with a conclusion that leaves no doubt: "Jesus is the 1st stone rejected by you builders that has become the cornerstone, and there is no other salvation in it".

It is like saying: "You are finished, you can retire, now we are the builders". Those leaders of the people, Elders and Scribes, were impressed and did not have the courage to punish them, and released them, recommending them not to speak of Jesus, a childish and foolish prohibition, as Peter observed: "We cannot fail to speak of those things which we have seen and heard".

And they talked about it with such ardor that after a few days all twelve were again in prison. They were delivered by an Angel, but they rebuked them and treated them with arguments that the Jews considered more convincing, that is, with strokes of the rod. The apostles came out "glad to have been judged worthy to suffer reviles for the name of Jesus".

Preaching, baptizing, distributing the Eucharistic Food, serving at the table, administering the commons: the twelve soon realized that they were few and elected, after praying and with the consent of the whole assembly of the faithful, seven Deacons (which means Administrators) for organizational and administrative services, thus remaining freer for the preaching and the prayer: with the Deacons begins the collaboration of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church.

Stephen was of the seven the youngest, the most ardent, the purest, the strongest. "Full of Grace and Fortitude", in addition to fulfilling the duties of his office, he collaborated with the apostles by teaching the people and performing miracles.

The scholars of the Synagogue could not stand that new and fascinating voice that overshadowed them and began to dispute with him, sure of putting him out of action soon, but they had engaged in a fight against the Holy Spirit and were beaten.

So they did what the powerful of all times do, who do not want to recognize themselves defeated on the terrain of fair competition and resorted to deception.

Repeating the tactics adopted against Jesus, they stirred up the people against him and looked for false witnesses. They brought him before the Sanhedrin, and those who were sitting before him to condemn him saw his face as that of an angel.

That angelic face, however, was the face of an accusing angel: "Hard of mind and uncircumcised of heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers were, so are you" then, as impatient at the sight of so much iniquity, he turned his gaze upwards and his face stretched out and lit up: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Nothing else was needed for the Sanhedrin scene to be repeated before Jesus when he said: "From now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God". Then shouts of scandal were heard, and Stephen was seized and led out of the city.

They dragged him beside a heap of stones, and in order to be freer to aim at the young man's head and breast, they took off their authoritative cloaks, which, however, they did not abandon, their anger not being so genuine as to make them forget the value of the clothes: they gave them in the custody of a young pupil of theirs who had followed them, called Saul, on whom Jesus, without their knowledge, had already set his gaze.

Stefano bent his knees under the hail of stones. He said with his beautiful smiling face:

"Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit" and added, not to be outdone by his Master:

"Lord, do not impute this sin to them".

He died swollen by the blows, composed and heavenly.

The Church celebrates this first Witness (Martyr means witness) the day after Christmas. It is the second Christmas, the Christmas of martyrdom for truth and charity the two great pillars of the arch that supports the Church and of the Glory that illuminates.

### III. THE CHURCH BEGINS HER JOURNEY

The life of Stephen's inanimate body, which his brothers covered with tears before they covered with earth, gave strength to the persecutors. Led by Saul, they entered the houses and took away those they found there, without distinction of sex and age as happens in every persecution.

But the very impetus of the assailants gave the alarm, and the faithful who managed to escape took the route of exile, in Judea and Samaria, then in Phoenicia, in Antioch, in Cyprus.

The apostles did not move. Violence did not succeed in eradicating them from Jerusalem before the Church was established there. They kept in touch with the exiles and knew that they were not hiding out of fear, but were openly preaching the Word of God from city to city.

Then they too decided to begin to divide, to "go" to preach the Gospel to all creatures" as they had been commanded. They sent Philip first, who took the road to Samaria, where he was immediately able to baptize a great number of men and women, and the number of the baptized increased so much that Peter and John also came to his aid.

After praying, the vigorous Peter and the ardent John laid their hands on the baptized so that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

The multitudes flocked to hear their word announcing a new message of love and were conquered by it.

In Samaria a famous magician, Simon, had asked Philip to be baptized, who amazed the people with his magic: he had asked for baptism on seeing him perform miracles and wonders greater than his own, and when Peter came to spread the Holy Spirit by laying on his hands, he was seized by the desire to have the same power.

Accustomed in his profession as a magician to dealing with money, he asked Pietro for the price in cash. Peter had one of his fits of disgust: "You and your money are going to perdition, because you have believed that the gift of God can be purchased with money."

Simon got what he deserved, and from this episode every unfortunate bargaining of holy things will be called simony.

The Divine Master did not cease to spur the apostles and sent an angel to Philip with the order to resume his journey along "a deserted road" where Philip met and baptized the Ethiopian who was to become the apostle of his land, then he found himself in Nitrotus and from there along the sea, always preaching and baptizing, he arrived at Caesarea Maritima, residence of the Roman procurators.

Peter also resumed, without shoes, or staff, or knapsack, the first visit to the brothers or saints (which means consecrated to God) in the different provinces and arrived at Lydda, where in the name of Jesus he ordered a paralytic to get up and make his bed.

Those were topics suitable for those who would have required too long preaching, and "all the inhabitants of Lydda and neighboring Sharon were converted to the Lord."

In Toppe, another nearby city, Tabitha died, a disciple who had distinguished herself in zeal for the works of God. These faithful, dismayed at the loss, sent two men to Lydda to beg Peter to come.

Peter went to Patches and made Tabitha alive to the weeping, gaining so many conversions for the Church that he was forced to postpone his departure for many days.

In those days he had a dream, in which God made him understand that Jesus with His blood had made all men brothers and there was no longer a distinction between people and people, between man and man.

The next morning three men from Caesarea came to him and said to him: "The centurion Cornelius, of the Italic Cohort, a just and God-fearing man, although a pagan, has been warned by an angel to let you go to his house and listen to what you say to him."

Peter left Toppe and went with them to Caesarea Maritima. He entered the house of the pagan Cornelius, who had gathered around him the family and relatives and welcomed them by kneeling at his feet, which made him uneasy: "Get up, I am a man too", and referring to his dream he added: You know that it is forbidden for a Jew to join a stranger, and to enter his house, but God taught me not to consider any man as profane or unclean. "He began to speak of Jesus and the Redemption, and while he was still speaking the Holy Spirit came upon those who heard him and who began to glorify God.

Peter, full of joy, baptized them and stayed with them a few days: the bridge between the Jews and men of every religion and nation was laid.

#### IV . THE ENLIGHTENED BLIND MAN

Saul had become, for the Princes of the Priests, a passionate and faithful executor: they could count on it, even in the risk. So they thought of sending him to Damascus, from where alarming news reached Jerusalem: the beautiful and rich city over which the Sanhedrin had power because it was the seat of a flourishing Jewish community, was becoming Christian.

It was necessary to act quickly and with suitable means, and they gave Saul power and men for the speedy liquidation of that Christian community by an orderly, wise and total persecution.

From Jerusalem to Damascus there are two hundred kilometers, and Saul had been riding for a few days at the head of his men, when already in sight of the city he was suddenly struck by a light more dazzling than that of the sun, which caused him to lose his balance and fall from his horse.

With his mouth in the dust he was already trying to get up, when he heard a clear voice, more authoritative than imploring: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Saul, frightened, raised his head as soon as he did: "Who are you?" "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" Jesus immediately considers each of his own. Saul is struck: "What do you want me to do?" "Get up and go to the city I'll tell you what you have to do".

Saul or Paul (the Christians will later call him by this second name) got up but immediately stretched out his hands: he could no longer see, his men took him by the hand and led him to Damascus.

He had started out sure of victory, he arrived defeated, but defeated by Love, as happens to those who with sincere purpose seek the good, even if for some time they look for it where it is not to be found or perhaps fight it.

In Damascus Paul allowed himself to be led into the house of a Christian named Judas, a very frequent name in the Israelite world, and for three days he remained there in the darkness of his sight so that he could better dispose himself to the dawning inner light. He spent those three days prostrate on the floor, praying, taking neither food nor drink: three days of purification and enlightenment.

At sunset, another Christian, Ananias, sent by the Lord, entered the house. He bent gently over Paul, helped him to his feet, and laid his hands on him. "Saul, brother, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road, sent me to make you regain your sight, and that you may be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Small scales fell from the eyes of the blind man and Ananias baptized and Judas gave him the ready-made food, which Paul consumed to his emotion and that of those present, while in their hearts they raised hymns of thanksgiving to the Lord of victories.

Among the Christians of Damascus the news spread that the dreaded persecutor had become their brother, but it was a news received with fearful joy, because they feared a betrayal.

Paul, as if to dispel their doubts with testimony, began to preach in the Jewish synagogues of the city, demonstrating to his ancient co-religionists that Jesus is truly the Christ awaited for centuries.

And what was to happen to him happened to him: from a persecutor he became persecuted. The disciples urged him to save himself and at night lowered him with a basket outside the city walls.

Paul retired for three years in the Arabian desert to perfect himself in doctrine and faith, then set out for Jerusalem, thus beginning the most marvellous apostolic journey of all time.

In Jerusalem he did not find an enthusiastic welcome: the disciples had kept in their hearts the memory of his sword, and not for that symbol, which later became of his sharp preaching, but as an instrument of persecution and death.

Barnabas was the most informed about the details of his conversion and convinced the apostles, who embraced him as a brother. Paul was filled with joy when he received confirmation from Peter that the Gospel preached by the apostles was the same Gospel revealed to him directly by Jesus.

But in Jerusalem he could not expect the honors of the Sanhedrin, and to escape capture and death he was forced to set out again, this time towards Tarsus of Cilicia, his hometown.

V.  
**THE APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES**

Paul remained in Tarsus for five years. For a living he was a craftsman like Joseph, but he did not work wood or iron: in Cilicia the art of cloth was already flourishing and Paul wove 1st fabric for tents.

At the end of the work, Paul did not rest: he preached, converted, baptized.

But this long stay in his city could not be explained by the apostolic fire that devoured him, after spending three years in the desert, if not for the necessity of replenishing himself with a great reserve of inner energy, maturing it in prayer, study and penance.

Barnabas followed him with careful care, because he knew God's plans for that person of no great physical resources yet gigantic in the Spirit, and at the end of the five years he commanded him in the name of the Lord, to follow him to the capital of Syria.

In Antioch they made their miraculous catch of souls and received their episcopal consecration.

They were thus ready for the great adventure of the conversion of distant peoples and set out on their first wide-ranging apostolic journey.

At Seleucia they embarked for Cyprus and reached all the inhabited places of the great island, always welcomed with favor and with great fruits: they had landed on a pagan island, 1a they left Christian.

They put to sea again and landed in Anatolia, and there they found the old hostility of the Jewish world: at Lystra the Jews tried to render Paul the same service of martyrdom that Paul had helped to render to Stephen, but his hour had not come: they stoned him and left him wounded on the ground, believing him dead.

His blood fertilized the land and the Christians flourished there, and with it now in vigorous bloom, the two apostles returned to Antioch: five years had passed, from 45 to 49.

In Antioch they did not find the happy union they had left there. There, too, it was those from the "chosen people" who felt superior to those whom Jesus had called from paganism, and they wanted these converts, before entering Christianity, to go through Judaism, adapting themselves to the ancient Jewish laws: they did not want to baptize them unless they were circumcised first.

Their arguments were not without some reason, and Paul and Barnabas did not feel the authority to intervene, so they decided to take the question to Peter, whose primacy was recognized by all the apostles, and the first council was held in Jerusalem, about the year 50.

The council, in the light of the Holy Spirit, decided in a different direction from that desired by the Jews, abolishing for all, Jews and pagans, the constraints on the ancient rites, such as circumcision and the prohibition of the consumption of certain meats.

The following year Paul was on the road again, this time no longer with the faithful Barnabas, but with other disciples who were fond of him, first Sulla, then Timothy and Luke the Evangelist.

Again to inflame the land where love for Christ Crucified passed for love of men ("I preach Christ and Christ crucified"): he resumed the road to Cilicia and Galatia, and landed in Europe, in Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens.

Athens, the "wise" city, of that wisdom which Jesus calls foolishness when it is not enlightened by the Holy Spirit, did not want to know about a crucified God, and pushed Paul away as an importunate intruder goes away, annoyed. "We will listen to you another time", the Greek philosophers told him at the Areopagus, but Paul's preaching was not wasted even there, because sensitive souls are everywhere, and the judge Dionysius converted with others, to Christianity.

In Corinth, among the more practical businessmen, he had more luck, and founded a flourishing church there.

In 54 he resumed his return route and stopped at Ephesus, from where he continued to Jerusalem, which was the final goal of all his journeys, a return to Peter, to report on the results and to confer on apostolic methods.

In Jerusalem he received news of new disagreements that arose in the different churches because of the differences that continued to exist between the converts from Judaism and those who came from paganism, and he did not stay long in Jerusalem, however dear that city was to him, for what he had made suffer and suffered there, for the great events he had witnessed.

He set out again in 55 to visit again all the churches he had founded, to restore peace and give them new strength of faith: he retraced Galatia and Phrygia, returned to Ephesus, crossed Macedonia, arrived in Corinth and on the way back visited Ephesus and Caesarea, before reaching Jerusalem, where he arrived in 58.

The city that "kills prophets" could not stand the presence of the "traitor" Paul and they thought of giving him a deserved death, several times now according to the Jews.

It was the Romans who saved him, more decisively than they did with Jesus and in order not to save him and not to have problems, they used the practical means that the powerful always have at their disposal: they took him to Caesarea and put him in prison.

## VI. PETER AND PAUL

In Caesarea, Paul was chained for two years. There were no grounds for condemnation, but the Romans had made him a political prisoner to please the Jews, given the interest they had in keeping them docile. Perhaps those two years would have sufficed, in the intention of the Romans, to calm the Jews, and Paul could have regained his freedom if he had not used his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar, who had him re-embarked, imprisoned, for Rome.

The voyage was interrupted by a shipwreck, with the 1st ship breaking up against the island of Malta, where prisoners and jailers had to winter .

Chained in limbs but not in word, Paul continued to preach salvation through Jesus Christ and converted the people of the island. He returned to sea in the spring, and was welcomed as a triumphant in Syracuse and Pozzuoli.

The Christians of Rome went to meet him at the Appius Forum, 43 miles from the city, and led him to the house of a brother of faith, where the prisoner was allowed to remain in the custody of a single soldier and with some freedom of movement, while still remaining tied with a chain to the soldier's arm. We were in the spring of 61.

Paul's first care was to gather the Jews who lived in Rome to explain that he had not come to accuse, but only to defend himself and obtain his freedom, many of the Jews were converted.

That appeal to Caesar cost him another two years of "preventive" imprisonment, and brought the Roman Church a new flowering of conversions, as well as a greater force against the first great Neronian persecution, which was already present in the air. In those two years Paul wrote some of his wonderful letters to the distant Churches, which he could not visit in person.

Nero's representatives acquitted him and sent him free in 63. Paul took leave of the brethren of the Roman Church and set out to sea, first to Spain and France, then to the East, to his beloved churches of Colossi, Miletus, Crete, Corinth, and Nicopolis.

He returned to Rome in 66 to receive the crown of martyrdom in the following year: he had fought the good fight as he says, and was ready to receive the prize of victory.

He was beheaded on the Via Ostiense, on June 29, 67, the same day on which Peter was crucified on the Vatican hill, with his head upside down, as he wished, feeling unworthy to die as an erect person like Jesus. •

In the second letter to the Corinthians, Paul describes the personal cost of his preaching, paid in labors, imprisonments, beatings, risks of death. five times he received from the Jews the 39 strokes of the flogging, three times the strokes of the rod, a stoning. He has suffered three shipwrecks, dangers of overflowing rivers, pirates, persecutions, hunger, thirst, fasting, cold, nakedness. He says, however, that already from the time of preparation in Tarsus he had been caught up in Paradise and had seen and heard things that human speech cannot bring to life.

His fourteen letters reveal the unparalleled value of his personality, his doctrine, his genius, which support an unparalleled apostolic zeal.

Peter seems to be a little overwhelmed. The Acts of the Apostles begin with the narration of his supremacy, his wonders, the rapid burning of the spirit through his mouth, then they leave Peter and follow Paul, to the end.

And this is understandable, because the Evangelist Luke, the writer of the Acts, accompanies Paul, and narrates events experienced, makes a kind of "travel journal", without caring about hierarchical relationships, which also spring from the story every time Paul returns to Peter to take counsel and receive orders.

Peter stayed in Jerusalem for the time necessary to consolidate the nascent Church, twelve years, then for seven years he moved to Antioch, and founded and directed that Church there, until he too sailed to Rome, the true capital of the world: conquering Rome for Christ meant "going to all nations" as in fact happened, with the price that we know and that we will remember.

Peter had already virtually founded the Church of Rome in the first preaching of Pentecost, converting the Jews who had come to Jerusalem for the feast and were returning to Rome Christians: having arrived in Rome, under Claudius, he became its First Bishop, preserving the supremacy over all the Churches, that is, over the universal Church, as revealed by his two pastoral letters, directed to the various Churches. In the second he praises Paul paternally and invites us to understand him in the difficult passages, speaking in the calm and confident tone of an indefectible authority. He remained Bishop of Rome for 25 years until his death, after having comforted thousands of martyrs in Rome and in the empire. Paul has the sharp sword of eloquence, Peter has the solid sword of faith and authority conferred on him by Jesus Christ: he is the first Pontiff of the new Church, the visible Vicar of the true founder who is Christ.

## VII . THE CHURCH IN ROME – PERSECUTION

In Jerusalem, the homeland of origin, the Church paid for its birth with the death of its Founder and Master and with the subsequent death of Stephen, James the Greater, and many others.

In Rome, the definitive homeland, the Church took the right of citizenship with the blood of its first visible head, Peter, and of the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul. An innumerable host of martyrs followed them, for three centuries and over all the lands of the empire, in the testimony of martyrdom, the most valid.

Persecution is the pruning foreseen by Jesus so that the divine Vineyard may preserve over the centuries freshness of luxuriance and fertility and over the centuries it has not changed its face: in the duel between God and Satan, at the beginning of time, man voluntarily sided with the Enemy; but the duel continues and offers the means to man to redeem himself by returning to the side of God, by baptism, by faith, by works, sometimes not excluded by the testimony of blood. Satan prefers men who have power on earth because pride remains his most powerful ally, and power not accepted as a service to be rendered to God leads to pride.

No one respects and honours earthly authority like a Christian, which he recognises as willed by God for the common good, yet no one like a Christian arouses suspicion in earthly authority. The origin of this suspicion and this resentment is in the serene but unequivocal gesture of Jesus with the coin between his fingers: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, give to God what is God's".

It is the first distinction of powers: Caesar has the coin and the first force, he remains the good steward, while God is the absolute master of everyone and everything, even Caesar's, and is the only supreme judge, the true giver of all good: Caesar must not take the place of God.

Caesar, a pagan, subject to Satan, instead demands the worship due to God; he remains at the "give to Caesar what is Caesar's", and means everything, even worship, beyond any other good, including life.

Today the terms of the disagreement have not changed, even if Caesar calls himself "Regime" and "Proletarian Dictatorship", and continues to admit no other God than himself.

Christians could not, as they cannot, worship Caesar. They arrived in Rome and paid homage to him, but they kept their worship for God. They were therefore rebels under the orders of the emperor, they were revolutionaries, the most peaceful and incredible revolutionaries, difficult to fight: but those who have weapons feel strong ("How many armored divisions does the Vatican have?" asked Stalin ironically), and yet not so strong as not to feel the need to rely on slander, even this old and immutable and miserable weapon. "I Christians eat children," Nero said, and it has been said lately of Catholic nuns in China. The origin of this stupid accusation is certainly to be sought in the Eucharistic Mystery, in which it was known that Christians were truly but mystically nourished by the flesh of the Lord.

Nero, the first persecutor of the long and interminable series of those who have believed themselves and will believe themselves to be the last persecutor, added the most astutely diabolical calumny, of the burning of Rome: "They have set fire to Rome! and he had set it on fire.

Intoxicated by the flames, he began to continue it on the bodies of Christians, illuminating their gardens sinisterly, and he was no longer able to extinguish them: and no one will be able to extinguish them. It is a light that has spread over the earth, a heat that warms multitudes of every color. Other Christians, in legions, were fed to wild beasts or rows of crucifixes were made in the heart of the city on the same places basilicas were built, which will remain over the centuries.

After four years of that orgy, in 68, Nero lost his life, without the bitter comfort of having "quelled the Christian revolt. The Jews, who had given him a hand in order to have given him a hand, had taught him by the example of Jerusalem, lost their city according to the exact prediction of Jesus: "There will not remain of the temple stone upon stone" and "This generation will not pass away before it happens".

That generation did not pass: in 70 there was a rebellion, and Titus, son of the emperor Vespasian, laid siege to the enormous crowd of Jews who had come for the Jewish Passover.

He reduced it to extremes, conquered it and ordered its total destruction with the massacre of the inhabitants.

The victims are estimated at one and a half million. The others were taken as slaves to Rome or dispersed in the various provinces. Since then and following a second massacre that took place in 132 under Emperor Hadrian, the Jewish people have dispersed on all continents and have tried over the centuries to rebuild a homeland, always hindered and persecuted.

## VIII .

### THE TIME OF THE CATACOMBS

Domitian, twenty years later, resumed Nero's work against Christians, and led the work of his family who had converted to Christianity with a less coarse and more organized commitment, even punishing those of his family who had converted to Christianity with death.

At that time John was in Rome, a prisoner. He had remained in Palestine, with a permanent residence in Jerusalem, until the Mother of Jesus lived on earth, whom her Son had entrusted to him, until the assumption of Mary into Heaven, then he too followed in the footsteps and destiny of the major apostles: he preached in Asia Minor and Ephesus, and arrived in Rome in chains. Diocletian reserved for him a cruel martyrdom, immersion in boiling oil, but the experiment went badly, he did not succeed in making him die. Then he got him out of the way, thinking of sending him to die far away, and exiled him to the island of Patmos, where John did not die, but instead wrote the Apocalypse, which crowns his Gospel, the highest in spirit, and the three beautiful apostolic letters. He died in Ephesus, very old.

The persecutions returned in periodic waves, as if every new emperor had it as an obligation in the good administration of the empire.

Trajan, the just emperor, was unjust with Christians, indeed he was a disqualifying judge: he ordered that they be set free until they were denounced, and denounced they were arrested and condemned. The complaint constituted a crime of the accused! Denunciations, of course, were not lacking and torture and death extended to almost the entire empire. The holy bishop Ignatius of Antioch was a victim of it.

Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius (who extended the persecution to Gaul), Commodus, Septimius Severus, Elagabalus, Alexander Severus, Decius, Gallus, Valerian, Gallienus, Aurelian, and Diocletian, throughout the second and third centuries, stained their name with Christian blood, using methods that were gradually legalized, without diminishing, but rather increasing their cruelty. With their deaths they gave life to the most illustrious martyr saints in the history of the Church: Cecilia, Irenaeus, Perpetua, Felicity, Fabian, Agatha, Dionysius, Cyprian, Sebastian, Agnes, Lucy, Lawrence, Pancras, Tarcisius.

Diocletian, the last persecutor of the opening imperial series (there were still others), died of hunger, with his mind distorted. Who knows if it was not also led there by the summary accounts of the three centuries of persecution, in which the martyrs are calculated at several hundred thousand, who won the first millions of faithful to the Church, who were estimated at thirty to fifty: the sect of the rebels against the imperial divinity had become a people, the most powerful among the peoples of the empire, and the firmest force of the empire itself.

The Catacombs are from that period. They were not born to hide the living, they were born to rest the dead, in deep tunnels dug into the compact and dry tuff of the Roman countryside (and elsewhere, especially in Sicily), shelter from the weather and human events. It is the sign of the respect that Christians immediately had for the body, destined for resurrection. No longer pagan necropolises, in their meaning of the city of the dead, but Christian cemeteries, places of rest in the sleep that will end, placed in safe catacombs, underground cavities.

In the early days, the living went there to bury and visit the dead and stopped there in prayer. The persecutions prolonged those stops, until they included the Consummation of the Eucharistic Mysteries, for greater tranquility and not to escape capture, because it would be naïve to think that those underground tunnels, flanked by multi-storey niches, were unknown to the emperor's soldiers.

All the Christian cemeteries, from the most famous of San Sebastiano, San Pancrazio and San Callisto, to the properly familiar ones of Domitilla and Priscilla, stood along the consular roads and were easy to access.

St. Callistus himself, who was the greatest architect of those underground cities, also builder of the beautiful Crypts, adorned with sculptures and paintings, creator of endless labyrinths superimposed on several floors; with emergency exits, did not save your life, and it was precisely at

the exit of the Catacombs, where he had gone to pontificate, having been elected Pope on the death of Zephyrinus, that he was arrested and killed, in 222.

The Catacombs jealously guarded the bodies of the martyrs, and preserved them for several centuries, until they were abandoned and the Basilicas began to be built, where little by little, the bones of the martyrs were moved, but they remain among the most admired and loved monuments of Christian life of the first centuries, for the precious treasure of faith and sacrifice they represent for the believers of all the peoples of the earth.

## IX . CONSTANTINE

Persecuted and martyred, the Church did not cease to be that leaven that was to permeate the mass, bringing about a non-violent, but slow, peaceful, sure and definitive transformation in the pagan peoples.

The Roman laws elevated the Roman citizen to a dignity completely superior to that of subjugated peoples, while denying the slave any human dignity: the slave was a "thing" of the master, therefore saleable, contemptible, outrageous, tortureable, punishable with 1st death. The master could sell his wife and children, degrade them, torture them and kill them in front of him without committing a crime.

Christianity, by baptizing the citizen master and the slave, raised them to the same dignity as children of God and brothers to each other, often brothers in martyrdom. Slavery suffered that violent shock which led to its progressive abolition and its perennial execration among all the peoples of the earth.

The pagan woman was subject to the man, certainly not in the sense desired by St. Paul, who makes the man the head of the woman so that he may be stronger and respect and protect her, and love her to the point of giving his life for her, if necessary: the pagan woman had in the man, like the slave, the master, who could dispose of her as he pleased, with repudiation, polygamy, concubinage.

Christianity blessed the marriage of one man with one woman, elevating it to the dignity of a sacrament and making it indissoluble: it made the two "one flesh" <sup>equal</sup> in dignity as creatures endowed with immortal souls, freed by Christ from all human and diabolical slavery.

The children of the pagan father were his exclusive property: he could sell them, kill them, expose them abandoned on the public road, he could take them alive whoever he wanted or they would be thrown dead into the cesspool.

The pagan world despised the child as a weak being, and education was marked by the ruthless discipline of force, which eliminated the weakest. Christianity brought the novelty of Jesus' "Let the little ones come to me" 1st protection, or rather 1st vision of the child as an example of innocence and simplicity for adults: God had not come down to earth as an adult, he had become incarnate in the virginal womb of Our Lady, he had become a child. Among the first works of charity of Christians was the loving collection of children on display, who were entrusted to believing families.

In the Roman world the poor, the plebs, were contemptible beings unworthy even to wear the military uniform, and Jesus was born poor, signifying the supreme value of the poverty of the poor. The Catholic priest with care of souls will be called pleban, then parish priest, head and father of the poor.

Over the centuries, other doctrines will try to steal this treasure of the new and perennial civilization brought by Christianity, in order to make it their own, but they will be unfortunate thefts: in other hands, taken away from the life-giving work of Grace, this treasure is immediately distorted and dehumanized.

Constantine, on his appearance from Gaul on the imperial scene, perceived this profound novelty of Christianity. Certainly the Christian mother and saint, Helen, contributed, the soldiers of her legions themselves, among whom the Christians were numerous, contributed. She moved from Gaul to Rome against the usurper Maxentius, and while marching at the head of her legionaries she had a famous vision of the Cross, against the background of the sunset, with the words "In hoc signo vinces" ("with this sign you win"), which even the soldiers saw and were enthusiastic about.

Constantine had the labariums replaced with others in the shape of a Cross surmounted by the monogram of Christ, and defeated Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge.

The following year, in 313, he issued an Edict from Milan proclaiming the Christian religion lawful in all the lands of the empire, ordering the restitution of goods confiscated from Christians during the persecutions.

He converted to Christianity, donated to Pope Melchiades 1st Domus Laterana and built the first Basilicas in Rome on the tombs of Peter, Paul, Lawrence, Agnes. They were not the first Basilicas in the absolute sense, because others had been built in previous centuries, but every persecution had invested and destroyed them: the Constantinian Basilicas were the first free basilicas, and immediately multiplied in the Christian lands, as far as Palestine, where Helena had one built on the site of the discovery of the Cross of Jesus, found and recognized by herself.

The Constantinian Basilicas stood majestic, in the shape of a Latin cross, with the entrance . facing east, from where the sun rises, to testify to the ardor and Christian gratitude in the Sun of Justice, Jesus. Later they came to constitute the urban center of the cities as a sign of faith, of the desire for peace and progress.

## X.

### THE HEALTHY BODY AND THE SICK MAMBRA

The Church was born healthy, even holy, but its members remained free to dwell in her integrity and holiness or to leave it: the body remained healthy, the members could, detaching themselves from the source of health, become ill.

These sick detached faithful, who had become infidels, also became the most dangerous persecutors; they did not shed the blood of brothers, nor did they attempt the devastation of the soul, they did not procure the temporal death of the body, they threatened eternal salvation.

They were restless members, who did not accept apostolic preaching with simplicity of heart: often proud, or entangled in different and conflicting doctrines, they opposed the clear vein of apostolic preaching with obstacles that wanted to divert it and lead it on their own treacherous terrain.

Heresies threatened the healthy and holy body of the Church from its birth and will threaten it for all centuries: the Truth is a light that wants the eye and soul to be clear, and will always meet haughty and corrupt gazes and restless souls; it will suffer without attenuating, it will overcome obstacles by emerging clearer and sweeter.

Among the first heresies, which lasted decades and even centuries, the main ones were three,

· Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Arianism.

Gnosticism means knowledge, science. It is a mixture of Judaism, paganism and Christianity. According to the Gnostics, God, being spirit, could not manipulate matter, and so he created the midway beings, the aeons, one of whom, the Demiurge, gave form to matter. A divine spark fell prisoner of matter and formed Man; another aeon descended into matter, near an apparent body, and freed the spirit from matter; this aeon was Jesus.

Mani, before being crucified and flayed by order of the emperor, preached his heretical doctrine which took the name of Manichaeism from him. According to Mani, in order to free himself from the coils of Satan, man must lead an austere life, feeling marked by three seals, one on the mouth, one on the hand, one on the chest: no vulgar words, no killing of animals and destruction of plants, no marriage. Man, in order to save himself, would have had to not eat, not reproduce, destroy himself.

Arius was a cultured priest and also austere. Concerned to save God's unchanging humanity, he denied the divinity of Christ, whom God would create before any other being out of nothing. Denied Christ the divinity, the work of redemption became impossible, and the Holy Spirit became a creation in turn, through the work of Christ.

The emperor Constantine, impressed by the spread of Arianism, promoted in 325, the first ecumenical council, at Nicaea, which approved the formula of the divinity of Christ, passed into the Creed: "The second Son is consubstantial with the Father," but Arius continued his struggle and dragged some Eastern bishops into it, while the emperor's interference in the affairs of the Church, the first of a most painful and long series, did not produce beneficial effects. Arianism, in its various transformations, passed into Germany and spread among the barbarians.

Heresies raised up in the Church her great defenders: the healthy and holy body reacted, conquered and healed; these strong defenders were rightly called Fathers of the Church, as if they were giving her a new life. St. Irenaeus defeated Gnosticism with his work "Adversus haereses" demonstrating that Gnosticism is subsequent to the birth of the Church and therefore not of apostolic preaching.

Manichaeism met St. Augustine, who was first a little taken by it, then fought it, but Manichaeism did not die completely and in the ninth century it became in Europe that Albigensian doctrine which tormented the Church in the Middle Ages.

St. Athanasius lived as a young man in the desert with St. Anthony the Hermit and was Bishop of Alexandria. he found himself enveloped in the Arian heresy and won with a generous firmness

towards the wanderers and inflexible against heresy. He was called the "Pillar of the Church" and the "Hammer of Arianism" and died in 373, after enduring exile five times.

## XI . THE FATHERS

The Apocalypse puts an end to the Bible which contains texts inspired by God from the Old and New Testaments, but it is the light that gives life to the stupendous flowering of Christian literature of the first centuries, as it will always give.

In the East and in the West, the first Christian centuries saw the rise of men who have remained among the greatest in the history of the Church and of humanity, and whom the Church has rightly called Fathers and Doctors because of the vigour of their faith and the splendour of their doctrine.

The former, the Apologists, defended the Church against the calumnies of persecutors, such as St. Justin and Tertullian (Tertullian's beautiful 1st well-known phrase: "The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians"); the others, theologians and doctors, defended against heresies and enlightened their doctrine, as in the East the scientist Origen, who reconciled Greek philosophy with Christian philosophy, and in Alexandria was a teacher to the great theologians St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Epiphanius.

It is from that period, in Alexandria, the 1st version of the Bible called the Septuagint, still of great interest.

While the Eastern Fathers used the Greek language, the Western Fathers wrote in Latin, and we will speak of the three greatest, who were St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Ambrose.

Jerome arrived in Rome, to meet the classical Greek and Latin pagans, at the age of twelve, at the same age as Jesus' first meeting with the Jewish doctors: he came from Dalmatia, from Stridon, where he was born in 347.

He was already thirsty for knowledge, and in Rome he found what he was looking for, in life and wisdom, and there he also found Christian ferment, with Pope Liberius, who noticed the boy's ingenuity and led him to faith: he baptized him at the age of eighteen.

Grace met the ardor of nature and turned it to the ardor of truth.

In order to devote himself better to biblical studies, Jerome went to the East, where he was ordained a priest, and to the study of Latin and Greek he added that of Hebrew, Aramaic, Syrian and Arabic, all the languages necessary for a profound knowledge of the sacred texts and the history of the people of God.

For his knowledge and the sharpness of his style he was called the Christian Cicero, and everyone had recourse to him, including that other dazzling mind that was St. Augustine.

Jerome was not only a great scientist, he was a saint for his profound humility and piety, and Pope St. Damasus chose him as his secretary and called him to Rome, but at his death Jerome retired again to Palestine and settled in Bethlehem, where in solitude and penance he became the greatest doctor of the Church in the biblical sciences.

He translated the whole . Old Testament in a clear translation, which took the name of the Vulgate, and restored the New Testament to its genuine splendor.

She defended the perennial virginity of Mary SS.ma, and founded a female monastery in Bethlehem, with St. Paula of Rome.

Pelagius, the English monk who denied original sin, had in Jerome an overwhelming opponent, and not being able to overcome him on the terrain of doctrine, he tried to overcome him on the more fragile terrain of physical life. The Pelagians attacked him and, not meeting him, set fire to his monastery and library. Jerome remained in Bethlehem and died there in serene solitude at the age of 72

Those who have read the confessions know enough about the tormented and glorious life of Saint Augustine, which began on the African side of the Mediterranean, at Tagaste, seven years after the first birth of Saint Jerome, in 354.

With St. Jerome, although coming from a different shore, he had in common the drive to Rome because of a great hunger for knowledge and the enjoyment of life.

His pagan father had given him the pagan meaning of life, his Christian mother, St. Monica, had not been able to free him from the heresies that tormented the Christian life of his country and that made him a Manichaeian.

From Rome he was attracted to Milan, where he went to teach Rhetoric and where he found Bishop St. Ambrose, the creator of the liturgical hymn, which he used for the living instruction of the masses.

A Roman, Ambrose, was in Milan as governor, and the people had acclaimed him bishop before he was a priest, and he received baptism, priesthood, and episcopal consecration at the same time. For

better to enrich the people with charity and truth and to enrich himself with divine knowledge, he became a poor volunteer and in a great austerity and holiness of life defended the people from heresies and imperial abuses. For the height of the works left he is also a great Doctor of the Church.

St. Augustine went to listen to his homilies in the Cathedral and was won over. In the meantime, St. Monica had followed her son to Milan, and continuing to weep, pray and work for his conversion, she managed to see him baptized by St. Ambrose.

Returning to Africa without a mother, who died in Ostia, but also without any signs of the past pagan life, he was ordained a priest and became Bishop of Hippo.

His works are innumerable, and the most famous, The City of God, is the unsurpassed masterpiece of defense of Christianity, then written against the Pelagians, the Manichaeans, the Donatists, who were ferocious against him and persecuted him as long as he lived. He endured the hardships of the struggle between the Goths and the Vandals invading his land. He is considered the founder of Christian philosophy and one of the greatest geniuses of mankind. He lived a monastic life and spent the last ten years in continuous prayer and penance, comforted by ecstasy. He died a holy death on August 28, 430.

## XII . THE ADVENTURE OF THE MONKS

The Spirit led Jesus into the desert, so that he might do penance there and receive the strength to face the devil, for the test of faith and the test of love, and to be filled with ardour.

One of the main effects of the Holy Spirit in the first centuries, after the apostolic impulse, was the monastic impulse, which developed in the third and fourth centuries, and populated the deserted places of East and West with hermits, anchorites and monks, who fled from the crowd for the love of God and man.

A young Egyptian from Heracleopolis was listening to the Gospel reading. The phrase: "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have, give to the poor and follow me" struck him. He sold his goods, which were not few, distributed the money to the poor, and took the desert route. Anthony was in his twenties, in his full youth, yet the Christian people immediately called him Abbot, that is, Father, and the Church then proclaimed him a saint.

Antonio crossed the Nile and stopped when he met a ruined and abandoned fortress at Pispir, far from the cities and villages, and it seemed to him like a palace.

He was nourished more by prayer and penance than by bread, and the devil had a free hand on him: he tormented and vexed him for years, without being able to overcome him.

On the other hand, the visitors won it, because the desert wind had spread the fame of his holiness and many flocked there in need of advice and help, and the persecuted Christians for comfort. At that time there was the persecution of Maximinus Daja, and in order to be among the persecuted, it was better to comfort them, Anthony retraced the route of the inhabited world as far as Alexandria, where he was able to comfort and advise even the great St. Athanasius, who was returning from exile.

But he had devoted himself to consuming himself with love in solitude and penance, and returned to the desert, further inland, where they could not reach him, on the shores of the Red Sea, and there he was the first to live the life of an anchorite, that is, of one who lives in seclusion.

After 85 years of penance, he died there at the age of 105, in 356. He wanted his body to lie dispersed and unknown, but it was found and transported to France, where in a plague that gave the sick a heat of fire, contact with his relics healed the sick from the plague and from the "fire" that then passed into the mouths of the people for "fire of St. Anthony".

St. Pachomius was a soldier of Licinius. He was not struck by the reading of the Gospel, which he saw carried out by Christian soldiers, and he became a Christian: he had walked so much armed, he wanted to walk unarmed, to conquer souls, and he turned his steps towards the desert, to win them in penance. He also stopped in Egypt, in the Thebaid, on the island of Tabenna, but he did not arrive alone: his example had drawn other Christians who had chosen the first way of penance, and Pachomius founded with them the first Cenobium or Monastery, and dictated the first Rule of monastic life, an austere rule of penance and obedience.

St. Ammonius, St. Maconius and St. Basil were the most famous founders of cenobitic life in the East, and St. Martin Bishop of Tours, St. Honoratus and St. Caesarino spread monasticism in the West.

The insertion of women into social life is not a new fact: in the Church they have been inserted into the Upper Room from birth and have always held an honorable place there, even if they are not called to the Hierarchy, which God has entrusted to the responsibility of man.

The monasteries of women flourished immediately in the East, alongside those of men, through the work of St. Paula Romana, of the two Saints Melanie, and of many others, and then flourished in the West, and St. Cesaria was their promoter.

Monasticism of men and women gave an impulse to the life of the Church in some respects not inferior to that of the apostles.

### XIII . THE CLASH WITH THE BARBARIANS

Jesus was born in the smallest land and in the time of the greatest splendor of the Roman Empire: he was born, in the remote Galilee, the Redeemer of men and the Savior of their institutions, but the empire rejected him and men killed him.

It was not, therefore, the birth of Jesus, nor was it the Christians who gave the sign and put their hand to the decadence and destruction of the empire, which several times, because of those ambitions and corruption that the Christians deprecated, divided and recomposed itself, giving rise to the progressive separation of the two civilizations, the West and the East, which at a distance of so many centuries continue to seek, without succeeding, their unification.

The Western Empire was the first to definitively collapse at the end of the fifth century by the barbarian Odoacer, who deposed and deported the last emperor, the boy Romulus Augustulus.

The Church found herself shaken by this long clash of rulers and peoples, and the East, where she was born, did not save her integrity; it instead saved the West, where the wisdom of God had driven it.

In the East, the Church suffered the assault of heresies teeming with contact with the imaginative and exuberant Hellenistic culture, while in Rome it had found the clarity and solidity of Latin culture, which best expressed the concept of unity and concreteness.

Rome has never ceased to struggle and suffer from the deviations of the Eastern Churches, supported, then, by those emperors, then by the various rulers, up to the events of our time in the countries beyond the Iron Curtain, with the humiliating subjugation of the Orthodox Church to those atheist rulers.

The Barbarians who pressed along the whole wide arc of the Euro-Asiatic borders did not originally go beyond certain limits and were absorbed by the empire: they were Barbarians of Germanic origin, like the Visigoths, the Vandals and the Suevi. The Vandals, however, reached Rome, plundered and destroyed immense treasures.

The Mongol invasions were more formidable and fatal, because of their coarseness and ferocity. The most tragic was that of the Huns, led by Attila, "scourge of God". After so many massacres committed, they were stopped by the unarmed, courageous and austere Pontiff St. Leo the Great.

The Barbarians were partly pagans, partly Christians, but mostly heretics, and especially Arians.

The Church of Rome bore their impact for several centuries, often replacing the fugitive or non-existent civil authority (and here is the unwanted, but suffered origin of temporal power, born from the need to oppose violence with an order established in defense of defenseless populations).

In these centuries the first shelters were born in the Church - hospitable houses then hospitals - for the sick, the elderly, children, the weak and the poor. Organized charity is born to help the hungry, fugitives, prisoners, and the persecuted.

In this time of decadence of customs and destructive raids, the Church saves the heritage of classical culture, with the documents of the ancient civilizations that the barbarians would certainly have destroyed and would have been lost forever.

The two "Great" (Great) Pontiffs of this period are St. Leo 13 and St. Gregory 13.

St. Leo, a Roman, was elected Pope by the people at the age of 40, in 440. He found himself immersed in the struggle against heresies and in the defense against the Barbarians. He appeased Attila, as we have seen, and healed Rome from the plunder of the Vandals, whom he persuaded to return to Africa, where they had previously landed, and without the emperor, having fled to Ravenna, showing up.

He freed the Church from subjection to the Emperor, who had influenced its life since Constantine, affirming the independence and superiority of religious power over civil power.

He lived a life of austere penance. In a clear style he wrote a hundred sermons chosen for depth of doctrine and originality of thought. He is a Doctor of the Church.

St. Gregory had made himself poor for the love of Christ by distributing his considerable wealth and retiring to a monastery, from which the people took him, at the age of 50; in 590 .

His election as Pope coincided with the end of the plague and the merit was attributed to his intercession.

In contact with the invading Barbarians, he worked for their conversion to Christianity and converted the Visigoths and Lombards

Against the Lombards he had defended Rome and had concluded peace with them without the Emperor, from Byzantium, feeling the duty to intervene.

He sent the monk St. Augustine to England to convert the island. He is one of the greatest Doctors of the Church for the excellence and number of his writings.

#### XIV . BENEDICTINE CIVILIZATION

In the sixth century the Barbarians began to encounter strange castles, which had unarmed and undefended walls. The life they led there intrigued them: they were castles populated only by men, austere in their countenance and gentle in their features, who knew all the sciences and without feeling humiliated they lowered themselves on the ground to till and cultivate it, like slaves and serfs.

The Barbarians were amazed and admired, often even frightened. In contact with those monasteries they became docile and allowed themselves to be instructed in a new civilization, where the servant and the master pooled possessions and strength for the fertility of the land and the division of its fruits.

Conquered by the new civilization, they could not resist the influence of Grace and converted to Christianity, in which they recognized the gushing source of the civilization admired and absorbed.

Their teachers, the Benedictine monks, had been founded by St. Benedict of Norcia, born in 480.

Benedict, as an adolescent, had followed the impulse of intelligent and enterprising young people, had gone to Rome, to get to know the classical world and the civilized world there.

He was soon disappointed, not by the classical world, but by the civilized world, which he found fatuous and corrupt.

In order not to be overwhelmed, he fled from it and retired alone in prayer, penance and study, in a cave, in Subiaco.

But what had happened to other hermits soon happened to him: he found himself discovered and reached.

Benedict welcomed those young people who had the same desire to refurbish the soul and life, but kept them separate, in small distinct hermitages.

Their number increased and separation was no longer possible, nor did it seem convenient to keep them all in the same place, which moreover could not contain them.

Benedict then set out on his way, in 529, and stopped on the Hill of Cassino, which seemed to him suitable for the construction of a large monastery.

There was an old temple of Apollo and Benedict demolished it. On those ruins he built with his monks and became himself an architect and mason, that Abbey of Monte Cassino which has been a beacon of civilization over the centuries, which helped to shorten the last war for the emotion that its destruction aroused in the world, and which rebuilt continues to be a beacon of civilization.

At Monte Cassino Benedict dictated his famous "Regula Monachorum", which has remained fundamental over the centuries, both for monastic life and for a healthy and balanced Christian life, even outside the monasteries.

It is based on the motto "Ora et Labora" (pray and work) which admirably unites prayer with work, so that there is no longer an effective prayer if it is not united with works or penance and suffering, which are the leaven of human work, nor is there truly good, productive work in its best and comforting sense. if it is not accompanied by prayer.

Work is understood in its most universal meaning, from the study of severe disciplines to the ploughing of the fields: the monk becomes the most complete and versatile man, capable of passing with the same serene and happy adherence from prayer to study and from study to manual work: modern sociologists are discovering its beauty and convenience.

The Benedictines are the most diligent translators of ancient works, the copiers of the originals that they have been able to transmit to us, the most severe scholars, and at the same time the provident land reclamators, the first organizers of agricultural communities with the redemption of serfs, the first orderers of a civilization founded on respect for the human person, the spreaders of the Truth and the Holiness of life on all civilized lands.

It is the monastic idea, which then developed in its various branches and was extended to the Christian world as a guarantee of a reserve of spiritual energies always renewed in penance and prayer, and always available for all the needs of the Church..

## XV . ISLAM

The Arabs are the descendants of Ishmael, the slave's son, "proud and indomitable as the wild donkey".

They were divided into nomadic tribes that met and fought each other not to tolerate limits of domination in their arid land.

In common they had the obligation of pilgrimage to their most remarkable city, Mecca, for the worship of the Kaaba, the temple of Ishmael.

The Christians had been able to reach them without converting them, because they were too indomitable and violent to accept their law of peace and meekness.

In 570 Muhammad was born among them, who as a young man earned his living by accompanying caravans along the desert tracks. He was a young man of lively intelligence and boundless ambitions: the desert did not make him lazy, but exalted him.

His first conquest was his marriage to a wealthy widow who freed him from the need of the grueling desert pilgrimage and allowed him to dive into study.

After a few years of isolation, he returned to his tribes as God's envoy, in Arabic Allah, and preached a new religion, Islam, which means passive resignation to the will of God, the despotic master of man, who is nevertheless granted the enjoyment of the pleasures of life, even the immoral ones, provided that the precepts contained in the Book (in Arabic Qur'an) are observed) gathered by Mohammed himself from a set of beliefs, Jewish, pagan and even Christian, in an often contrasting and even vulgar mixture.

Islam is a religion without priesthood or sacrifice, the 1st fall and redemption are not allowed, and Jesus is presented there as a Prophet, together with Abraham and Moses, and not as the Son of God: the greatest Prophet and true envoy of God is Mohammed.

The muezin, who invites the faithful to prayer five times a day, is not a priest, he is the guardian of the temple or moschea. In addition to prayer, pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime, fasting in the prescribed month, Rarnadan, almsgiving are required.

Divorce, polygamy, repudiation of women, oppression by the State and the powerful, and a licentious life are permitted.

Heaven is a place of delights for the senses, Hell is a place of deprivation of the senses.

Muhammad is not the prophet of God, he is the prophet of the Arab peoples. It embodies its violent nature, the virulence of instincts, its spiritual laziness, the spirit of adventure.

He becomes a prophet and civil leader and proclaims a holy war against the infidels, promising paradise to those who lose their lives.

The Muslims, (from the Persian musliman, man of Islam) or Mohammedans, from their leader, overflowed, possessed, from their bare peninsula, and invaded the Byzantine Empire, reached India, conquered Africa, passed into Spain, where they overwhelmed the Visigoths, reached France.

They landed in Sicily and raided Italy, as far as Rome.

They destroyed cities, defeated peoples, dispersed treasures of art and culture, such as the precious libraries of Antioch and Alexandria.

They took the Christians' valid prisoners as saleable products and sold them on their markets.

For four centuries their emblem, the 1st Crescent, signified terror and the death, destruction and slavery and the end of civilization.

They were not to prevail and did not prevail, but the ruins they caused were immense, and their effects have not yet ceased, although their civil and political evolution, respect for Our Lady, the work of St. Francis, and subsequent relations in the Christian Western world have greatly influenced their spirit.

Six Arab states currently have diplomatic relations with the Holy See.

Muhammad was partly overwhelmed by the same fanatical wave that he had aroused, and to escape death, in 622, he had to take refuge in Medina. From the date of his flight (in Arabic Hegira) Muslims mark the beginning of their era.

He died ten years later, recognized by his followers as the true prophet of Allah.

## XVI. CHARLEMAGNE

If the Church canonized the works of Christians instead of their souls, Charlemagne would be one of its saints; in fact, not a few dioceses practiced his cult locally, precisely under the impulse of his greatness, which he had made Pope Adrian I say: "A new Constantine most Christian emperor has appeared among us".

Pius IX put an end, after ten centuries, to this spontaneous cult, limiting it to the city of Aachen, where Charlemagne had died at the age of 72 in 814.

And he had died a holy death, girded with a hair shirt and macerated by penance and prayer. He is a great figure, indeed a very great one, for the Church and for the civil world.

As the most Christian king of the Franks and defender of the Church at the beginning of the Middle Ages on a gloomy horizon of wars, discords and heresies, when he stretched his gaze over the vast horizon of the Roman Empire, inhabited by the barbarian peoples who had invaded him, and saw it divided and torn apart, he conceived an immense plan: to reunite the empire under a single sceptre and under the spiritual guidance of the Church: no longer the Church protected by the emperor, as under Constantine, but the Emperor crowned by the Pope, the true spiritual head of the peoples above. of the emperor himself, as the spirit is above matter.

It was a design that placed Charlemagne above the spirit of division of his time, and already made him a ruler, a leader, a crusader.

He set to work, first against the Muslims, then against the Lombards, the Saxons, the Normans, the Thuringians, the Bavarians, the Slavs: in forty-six years of reign he fought and won fifty-three wars.

He converted subjugated peoples who were not yet Christians, such as the Saxons, and defended the Pope against Byzantine interference and the intrigues of the nobles.

An admirer of Rome for his greatness, he felt himself Roman more by the choice of his soul than by the right of conquest, and he wished to be crowned Roman emperor, in St. Peter's, by the hands of the Pope, remaining kneeling at his feet, as a sign of homage and filial obedience.

Pope Leo III on that Christmas night of 800, in the pomp of the solemnity of the rite, girded him with the imperial crown, striving to overcome the emotion so that the voice would be firm:

"To Charles Augustus, crowned by the will of God great and peaceful Roman emperor, life and victory".

The Holy Roman Empire was born, under the sign of Christ.

Rome had become the center of a kingdom far greater than the borders of the Empire, and Charlemagne wished to respect this most august authority: he did not establish the first court in Rome, but the first in Aachen.

He divided the empire into counties and marches, governed by counts and marquises, who had to consult with the bishop to settle disputes and for the correct guidance of the subjects. The Bishops enjoyed jurisdictional immunity but had to be irreproachable.

The counts and marquises had to respectfully welcome the Missi Dominici as Ambassadors of the Lord in the double meaning of the Lord of Heaven and the earthly emperor: in fact, there were always two, a civil and an ecclesiastic.

The laws were proclaimed in the open air, in the presence of the people, preferably in spring, as the flowering of a new civilization and those meetings were called the Fields of May.

The most important laws concerned the defenses of the empire, with the institution of compulsory military service, the diffusion of culture, with new schools open to the people even within the monasteries, the organization of work in the Guilds, which were the first trade guilds.

Charlemagne had traveled the Empire in the reconquest of the sovereignty of Rome, he had encountered everywhere the works of Roman civilization, and he wanted to restore and expand them, he built new roads and new fleets as trade by land and sea expanded.

The Church acquired a prodigious security and breath, civilization had a great impulse, barbarian peoples became civilized and Christian, and yet the Church did not canonize this great man when it canonized a Conrad of Parzham, a humble convent porter.

The measure of the Church is not a human measure, it is a divine measure: it does not bow to the greatest of Christian emperors, while girding him with the imperial crown, but bows to the humblest of friars: Charlemagne the man had his faults, and they were also very serious, and for this reason he cannot be cited as a model of life; but he remains equally in the history of the Church a figure of exceptional value.

## XVII . FEUDALISM

The films we see about feudalism portray an aspect of it that is more imaginative than real, cinema does not know how to be realistic with the past, it is not clear whether out of respect for the dead or for fear of compromising oneself or out of ignorance: the feudalism of cinema is a chivalrous and poetic feudalism, as it was only in part and not precisely according to cinematographic events.

History, as a counterweight, mistreats him too much, emphasizing rather his shadows than his light. There were shadows, and dense and often gloomy, but it was not all shadow, the light prevailed over the shadow, even then and precisely thanks to the Church, as always happens in human affairs, since she was born from the Side of Christ with the commitment to live among men.

Feudalism was born with Charlemagne. It was not an absolute novelty because every emperor, indeed every ruler, uses to give rewards to those who serve him effectively and faithfully and the rewards in lands were already in place, but it had not yet taken on an organic and historical face.

Charlemagne even made it the structure of the empire, with a single emperor over many different peoples, but each people with its feudal lords, masters in their own fiefdom of the land and of men, with military powers and justice, as true sovereigns, while remaining in the oath and de facto loyal to the Emperor, whom they had to help with men and means in case of war.

As long as Charlemagne lived, the empire lived and the fiefs lived in peace enough, but his death was the death of that unity which had never been able to have the homogeneity and solidity of the unity of Rome, and of that peace maintained by force.

The empire was divided among the descendants of Charlemagne, feudal lords, made opponents to each other out of greed and fear, those castles were built that still, in their ruins, arouse a sense of oppression in the visitor.

The Church also owned fiefs, granted by Charlemagne to deserving bishops, and found itself in the fray. There was already a patrimony of St. Peter's, formed at the end of the persecutions with the Constantian restitution of goods, and with bequests in lands, even extensive, by wealthy faithful. It was a patrimony that served at the expense of the already flourishing community and to help the poor in times of peace, and of peoples in times of war, invasions and famines.

Charlemagne was very generous with the Church and increased the temporal power already constituted spontaneously when the popes began to replace the fugitive emperors in the defense of Rome against the barbarian invasions to prevent massacres and pillages.

To Rome and Campania, which were already under the dominion of the Church, Charlemagne added the lands that today form Latium, Umbria and southern Tuscany up to Viterbo, Orvieto and Soana (*Sovana*). The greatest struggles and intrigues were caused by the investitures for succession to the ownership of the fief, and bishops and even popes were taken from them, where personal interest prevailed over the common good, but the light of the Church was great even then and shone on the bloody haze of time.

The monks left the Abbeys loaded with sacks of flour that they distributed in the countryside plundered by rival armies, and not a few Bishops became instruments of peace and justice. The words of St. Gregory the Great were still alive; "I do not want the patrimony of the Church to be stained with sordid gains".

Without the Church, the Truce of God would not have been born, which imposed the suspension of the struggle on the great liturgical feasts, we would not have had the Right of Asylum, which saved the lives of the persecuted who had taken refuge in a church, and we would not have had the Cavalry, one of the kindest expressions of nobility of all time.

The Knight consecrated himself to God in defense of the Church, of the woman, of the weak, of the child, of the oppressed. His sword was no longer to be stained with fraternal blood out of ambition of conquest and hatred, it was not to pierce men thrown into the fray for the interests of others, because

it had the shape of the cross, it was a crusader sword, as a sign of justice, generosity, nobility of soul and intentions.

The Knight was not the eternal lover represented by today's films but had to remain strong and noble also for moral virtue, and three centuries later, St. Francis will proclaim himself Knight of Christ, without blemish and without fear, in the footsteps of the ancient Christian knights

## XVIII . THE SCHISM OF THE EAST

The East gave us the Savior and gave us the Church, then it wanted so much gift not to remain without stimulus and it gave us and continues to give us reasons to prove our faith and our faith beyond love .

It struck us, in the ninth century, with the first great blow that divided the Church in two and which has not yet been healed: it brought us the Eastern Schism .

The first Christian emperors did a great good and did a great harm to the Church by attracting her into their unhappy affairs, which took away from Rome the primacy of political and civil authority and transferred it to Byzantium.

The Eastern Bishops felt the closeness and support of the Emperor, and while continuing to obey the Bishop of Rome, whom they recognized as the successor of St. Peter and the visible head of the universal Church, they did so with less vigor and not without reservations: it seemed to them that they were obeying, at a time when the sword still had so much authority to those who had preserved an ancient nobility but had lost prestige and strength: Nine centuries had not sufficed to impress on the minds of those warlike or more precisely quarrelsome peoples the imprint of the superiority of the spirit over armed matter.

On their behalf the Popes, in obedience to the mandate received from Christ to preserve and preach

the Truth of a single Faith in a single Mystical Body, had the painful task of intervening in the East more to cut off from the still young Body the members sick with heresy than to comfort those brothers with donations and privileges, and we know that the hand that punishes, even if it uses the weapon of love, appears heavier than the hand that caresses.

As a greater proof of her divine solidity, Rome had to think rather of defending herself than of expanding. As we have already seen, the Saracens had become so bold that they went as far as the walls of Rome and despoiled the Basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul, which remained outside the walls.

That holy Pope who was Leo IV had to spend money, time and energy defending the very vital center of the Church from their incursions and transformed the Vatican into a fortress by encircling it with the massive walls that formed, from his name, the 1st Leonine City .

They were not walls erected to divide Rome from the Christian world, on the contrary they were walls that were supposed to strengthen the union, but in the East, even because of those walls, they felt freer.

The Eastern Schism has as its "official" reason a different theological interpretation of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, and as a "practical" and very earthly reason an excommunication of Bishop Ignatius of Constantinople, for the Emperor Bardas, who was soiled in soul and body.

We know what happens in certain cases, when the punished does not repent and has strength on his side: Bardas sent Ignatius into exile and elected Photius, a man who was great in many things, in intelligence, culture, ambition and pride, so much so that as a simple layman he was not afraid to be consecrated bishop by another interdicted bishop.

The Pope, as they were supposed to expect there, did not recognize him, and Photius engaged in a struggle against Rome, accusing her of many things without substance, and of one which had substance, but to his credit, that of preferring celibate priests to married priests: he went so far as to excommunicate the Pope, excommunicated.

The new emperor Basil the Macedonian found Photius great above all in wickedness, and deposed him, recalling to Constantinople, from his exile, his legitimate pastor Ignatius, and Pope Adrian II succeeded in convening a Council, the Eighth Ecumenical Council, in that city, which overcame the differences and reunited the Eastern Church in Rome.

For a century there was no longer any talk of a real schism, but the relations between the bold East, although it had nothing to sing of glory, and a tried West, remained tense and difficult, until in 1053 the Patriarch of Constantinople Michael Cevularius. he closed the Latin churches, accusing them again, in the footsteps of Photius, of having abandoned the apostolic traditions.

Pope St. Leo IX excommunicated him, but Cartularius burned the bull of excommunication, mistreated the Pope's legates, and decreed the detachment of the Greek Church from the Latin Church, a detachment that still endures.

The Catholic Church has never ceased to love those separated brethren, to pray for them and to hope for their not too distant return, which ever more evident signs now make possible.

## XIX . GOD AND CAESAR

Pilate had offered Jesus Caesar's first protection: "You do not know that I have the power to condemn you, and the power of Jesus answered him: "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from on high (not from Rome then, but from God).

Pilate found himself caught between God, whom he felt present in Jesus, and Caesar, his august and fearsome earthly master, and he came out washing his hands of it.

Jesus had commanded his followers to respect Caesar, but he had not allowed Caesar to hinder God's plans: Caesar should take what is due to him, subjection, but do not ask what is due to God, the freedom to live according to His laws of salvation.

Caesar remained on the sidelines: the death of Jesus did not seem to be an event that could affect the empire, but he remained on the sidelines for a short time, until the Christians went to distinguish him, and not to oppose to him, earthly authority from divine authority.

Since then Caesar, in the guise of any powerful man on earth, has found himself in front of the Church and has no longer been able to wash his hands of it.

The truly Christian Caesars helped her in her work of salvation with good laws, the jealous Caesars of God oppressed and tore her apart, the falsely Christian Caesars did the worst harm to her, interfering, out of ambition and interest, in the things of God.

The tenth century of life was for the Church the century of the hardest trial, for the mixture of the sacred with the profane that the powerful laity made there, almost subjugating it to their ambitions. If the Church had not had divine roots, that storm would perhaps have uprooted it from the earth, and instead it came out, but strongly..

It is the century of simony, with the 1st purchase and sale of the fiefdom-bishoprics to the highest bidder, with the election of the Pontiff by Roman patrician families, with the simultaneous appointment to the Papal throne of more than one Pope (27 Popes and anti-Popes in a century, but no Pope Joan, who never existed).

The Bishops-Feudatories received a double investiture, that of civil power, with the sceptre, and that of religious power, with the crozier and the ring, but the first preceded the second, and was often the most coveted, and moreover even the second was not given by the Pope, it was given by the Prince.

In Rome a woman, Marozia, had Pope John X imprisoned, helped him to die early in prison, and gave St. Peter as the new successor. his son.

With good will the Ottoni of Saxony succeeded in putting the Holy Roman Empire back together with the addition of Germanicus and in readjusting the affairs of the Church a little, but in spurts, with relapses, because the sword is an insecure support for the 1st Cross.

It seemed that Jesus had fallen asleep again on the boat and left in those blood waves, but he was watching: he suffered, he watched and he provided.

The French Abbey of Cluny had remained under the direct control of the Pope, like an island out of the waves, and within those severe walls the intact leaven of holiness was cultivated, in silence, which went from there, to renew the mass, throughout Europe.

And he left for Rome. It was handed over to a dry and strong monk, Hildebrand, who had retired to Cluny after having been in Germany with Gregory VI and having seen the havoc that the sword and gold made of the Cross..

In Rome, in 1048, he found chaos: there was the Pope of the Tuscolani patrician family, Benedict IX, who had defeated the Pope of the Crescenzi family, Sylvester III, and was fighting the Emperor's Pope, Damasus II.

The Emperor Henry III elected Bishop Bruno of Toul, a wise and saint, as Pope, who took the name of Leo IX, but Hildebrand advised him not to leave for Rome until he had obtained a regular election by the Church.

It was the first act, resolute and solemn, of releasing the authority of the Church from the illicit interference of Caesar.

## XX . CANOSSA

Who won in Canossa? Before being pontiff, the monk

Hildebrand was already the strength of the Papacy: With St. Leo IX he had traveled throughout Europe to convene and preside over councils that were the red-hot iron of Reformation in the wounded flesh of the body of the Church and called Bishops and Clergy to the discipline and dignity of the priesthood.

Saint Leo IX died of grief for the Eastern Schism. Hildebrand remained alongside three other Popes, Victor II, Nicholas II, Alexander II.

Nicholas II and Hildebrand succeeded in winning back simoniac bishops from the Church, in bringing priests back to celibacy, in remitting the election of the Pope to the cardinals.

With Alexander II, the Benedictine monk who seemed to possess the vigor of John the Baptist defeated the antipope Honorius II.

Persevering humility did not free him from his election to the Pontificate, which took place by general acclamation in 1073, on the death of Alexander II.

Hildebrand, who became Gregory VII, found himself face to face with the Emperor Henry IV, the most powerful and the truest of the antipopes, a dissolute destroyer of the moral integrity of the Church, an investor and protector of simoniac bishops, a corrupter of the clergy.

Gregory VII assessed the seriousness of the struggle and the dangers it would raise, but he did not doubt the rights of God and confronted the emperor by forbidding the laity to carry out sacred investitures, under penalty of excommunication, for those who gave the investiture and for those who received it.

Excommunication was a very serious penalty which contained the loss of civil power.

Henry IV opposed to the Pope the authority that temporal power had acquired over religious power and sent him a decree of deposition to Rome.

In the presence of one hundred bishops assembled in council at the Lateran, Gregory VII replied to him with a 1st excommunication, declaring him deposed from the throne and releasing his subjects from the oath of fidelity. Christian peoples resorted to the power of the Pope to escape subjection to emperors who endangered the free exercise of the faith.

After Henry IV was deposed, it was a matter of electing the new sovereign and the Saxons asked Gregory VII to participate, in February 1077, in the Diet of Augsburg which was to elect him.

Henry IV did not wait to present himself defeated at the Diet, but went to meet the victor and surprised him in Lombardy. Gregory VII did not want to face him on open ground and returned to Canossa, in the Reggio Emilia area, in a castle of the Countess Matilda, the 1st Great Christian Countess .

The wolf took the soft skin of the lamb and presented himself at the castle of Canossa alone, barefoot or dressed in sackcloth.

Gregory VII attempted the first proof of sincerity by letting him knock in vain for three days in that rigid season, and at the end of the third day he listened to him.

Was he convinced of his repentance? Or did the profound goodness make him have pity on that soul, entrusting its judgment to the Lord?

He listened to him and absolved him from excommunication, making him swear that he would accept the decisions of Augsburg, renouncing the throne if necessary.

Henry IV swore an oath, and returned to Germany with the taste of revenge in his mouth. He managed to wreck the 1st Diet of Augsburg and remain on the throne despite a second excommunication.

He embittered the life of his absorptor, electing him an antipope and forcing him to have recourse to the Normans, led by Robert of Guiscard.

And St. Gregory VII died in exile, in grief, in Salerno, in the year 1085.

The intrepid monk did not appear to be a defeated Pope, but as Jesus died defeated and as St. Peter died defeated; Defeated holiness is part of the mystery of the Church's history: it is the good wheat that dies to bear fruit.

St. Gregory affirms it in his last words: "I loved justice and hated iniquity, for this reason I die in exile."

And the justice loved and served by the offering of life bore fruit in the reform of morals, which reawakened to the Church a new fidelity <sup>to</sup> the divine mandate.

## XXI. THE CRUSADES

The red cloth Cross sewn on the chest or shoulder that called the liberators of the Holy Places "Crusaders" also indicated their character, more as rescuers than conquerors.

Armed with enthusiasm rather than with the sword, organized without a staff of a straightforward military brand, they almost all went to their deaths, but it was not a vain death.

The land where the Redeemer was born, preached, and died crucified, had long been in the hands of the Arab Muslims, and the Christian world wept for it, but it had not risen in arms, because the Arabs had contracted and built the mosque next to the Basilica, they had not torn up the Cross, and they allowed free passage through Jerusalem to Christian pilgrims.

There had been some attempt to liberate the Holy City, but without consistency. Gregory VII had suggested it. as a pledge of good will to Henry IV, but the rebel emperor did not show that he had taken up the suggestion.

The situation worsened with the rise of the Turkish crescent moon in the eastern sky, which pointed decisively to the west, and was a manifest sign of disaster, so much so that it did not even respect the Arab Muslim brothers and took away their dominion of Jerusalem.

The Turks immediately tore up the Cross and the pilgrims who came to kneel on that land never got up again because the Turks tortured and quartered them.

The Christian world had a shiver that struck everything, from Pope Urban II, to the princes to the people. Urban II, a French pope and a saintly energetic, wanted to be the first to address the French Christians, went to Clermont, and in October 1095 held a council there to invite the Christian peoples to free the Sepulchre of Christ from the hands of the infidels.

The effect was magical and the Pope had to present himself to the crowd that had come to acclaim him with the cry of "God wants it".

God also wanted order, but they did not think much of it, and the fiery monk Peter of Amiens, called Pierre the Hermite, gathered a hundred thousand men and without waiting for the regular army led them to die of starvation and disease in the limestone and desert gorges of the Balkans, before clashing with the Turks.

A few months later, on August 15, 1096, the army left, led by another Frenchman, Godfrey of Bouillon, and composed of six hundred thousand infantry and one hundred thousand cavalry, French, German, Italian.

The Maritime Republics, Venice, Genoa and Pisa gave the ships: the most generous was Pisa, with 120 ships.

Better organized, though not superbly armed, the crusaders arrived in Constantinople, made arrangements with . The Emperor, and they clashed with the Turks in Anatolia.

They did not win them out of strategy or freshness of strength, they won them out of courage and enthusiasm, many of them, in the greatest number, remaining to remake that land Christian with an expanse of Crosses, red in color and blood on the ground.

The survivors arrived in Jerusalem, besieged it, conquered it and conquered it on July 15, 1099. They wanted to make Godfrey of Bouillon King, but the victor remembered Jesus and did not want to be an earthly King: he contented himself with the more modest title of Defender of the Holy Sepulchre, and instituted the Military Orders of Chivalry, which still endure.

The ferocious Saladin reconquered Jerusalem in 1187. From the first to the seventh and last crusade, the Christians tried to hold and reconquer Jerusalem and the Holy Places: the animator of the Second was St. Bernard, in the last St. Louis IX, King of France, died in Tunisia, but Jerusalem remained with the Mohammedans. The plague, the unpreparedness, the hardships and even the discords prevented its success, but the Turks did not overflow on this side of the Mediterranean and the Christians of Europe learned to know the East and to establish trade, and to re-establish it where it was interrupted.

Christian Europe was saved from the Crescent and at the same time from Feudalism.

The Crusader enthusiasm that had taken together the Prince, the Feudal Lord and the Serfs had brought them together: they met face to face for the first time, or rather heart to heart, and discovered that they had the same heart, the same soul.

Feudalism received a decisive blow, and on the green sunset of the Crescent and reddish of the Feudal Queens rose the clear ribbon of the Free Communes.

## XXII . THE MUNICIPALITIES

The soul of the first Free Municipality of Italy is Bishop Ariberto, who helped the people of Milan to give themselves free institutions and designed the carroccio as a symbol of freedom.

The autonomy of the Communes from the distant Emperor and from the neighboring feudal lords was promoted, supported in defense of the Bishops and the Church, because the feudal Castle divided the Bishops from the people, while the Town Hall called the people first around the Bishop, then obtained the capacity of government, to freely administer themselves, in harmony with the Bishop administrator of eternal goods.

The free corporations of the working people redeemed from servitude, promoted by the communes, had Christian statutes, statutes which still serve as a vigorous root for the most advanced syndicalism and social insurance.

Against the free communes and against the free exercise of the Church, Barbarossa Frederick of Swabia rose up against the Germanic background.

The emperor came to Italy to free Pope Eugene III from the assaults of the rebel monk Arnold of Brescia who had set the Roman nobility against him, but on the way he forgot the liberty of the pope to suppress or oppress that of the communes, and arrived in Rome when the pope had already died in exile. He found Adrian IV on the papal throne and between the two contenders he became master: he had Arnaldo da Brescia hanged and sent the Pope to die in exile too, in Anagni.

The third Pope that Frederick found himself in front of, in 1159, Alexander III, from Siena, did not show that he trembled before the red beard of the violent emperor and not having been able to peacefully induce him to return to the boundaries of the earthly domain, he threw him back there by excommunicating him.

The emperor did what emperors have always done when overcome by the spiritual strength of the Church (is this not the case today, in Russia and China?), he elected a pope for his own use, that is, an antipope, in Victor IV, and then elected three more, in twenty-one years.

An emperor who makes a gesture like that cannot feel isolated and Frederick Barbarossa asked for support for the hard-fought communes, but the Communes, always with Milan at the head, remained loyal to the legitimate Pope, Alexander III.

So what does an emperor do? Does he recognize his wrong? No, it would be an act of too high wisdom; it is instead much more spectacular to insist and punish: Crema and Milan were the most greedy meal of his anger.

But the rubble is a tomb for the dead, not for the living, and a few years later, in 1167, the risen Milan managed to form the Lombard League between the Municipalities of Northern and Central Italy, which in Pontida swore to remain faithful to the Pontiff of Christ and not to that of Barbarossa.

Not even this resurrection made Barbarossa reflect, who blamed the Pope and set off the army towards Rome again. To show the Pope what opponent of his divine authority he had brought up, he slaughtered Romans and forced Alexander III to take refuge in Benevento. God, in order to show him the other side of His mercy, broke up his army with the plague and forced him to cross the Alps disguised, as the evildoer that he was.

The Italian communes breathed with relief and in homage to their true Pope, and to make their union operative and defensible, they built a new fortified city which they called by the name of the Pope.

Barbarossa, having recovered his health and vindictive vigour, having forgotten his merciful lesson, felt the bitterness of that city of Alexandria in his mouth, and asked the Italian municipalities to please let him destroy it as a sign of the Pope's denial.

1 The Commons replied that rather than approve of a schism they were facing the risks of war; and there was war.

There was, as we know, the 1st victory of the League at Legnano in 1176, and the emperor finally left us, with the 1st lance and the 1st flag under the wheels of the Carroccio, the hard baggage of his pride: the following year, in Venice, he kissed the feet of Alexander III at the entrance to St. Mark's Basilica.

The Municipalities. they were born in the maternal womb of the Church and had been able to prevent, with grave sacrifices and invincible valor, that her maternal womb should be torn apart again: their young life still had an irreplaceable need of it, as indeed all institutions that want to remain sacred.

### XXIII . KING OF KINGS

Lothair of the Counts of Segni became Pope Innocent III in 1198 at the age of 37 when he was not yet a priest, although he was a cardinal-deacon, and then had the priesthood and 1st episcopal consecration.

The thirteenth century was beginning, the century of contradictions. In Germany the Christians were divided into Guelphs (partisans of Welf, of the house of Bavaria) and Ghibellines (from Weiblingen, their birthplace, and their qualification, since that castle was owned by the Swabian house), and fought among themselves; in France the heresies of the false poor massacred the faithful transforming them into infidels and King Philip Augustus became unfaithful to his wife and therefore also to the faith; in England King John Landless (and without peace) oppressed his faithful subjects.

In Spain Dominic de Gusman was born with his true poor, who preached the truth (and were called preachers or Dominicans) in defense of the Pope and the Church, in Italy from Assisi, dressed in sackcloth, Francis of Pietro Bernardone, and went singing everywhere the praises of true poverty, peace and universal love.

Innocent III was young, strong and resolute: the first glance he gave to the Church, the second to the princes. He saw the Church a luxuriant field to be cleared and set to work with zeal, a zeal that made him save its unity and was a great merit. On the contrary, he also called the Greek Church to unity, but the first led to some severity, to the point of not wanting to approve new monastic rules, not even those of his most faithful and powerful collaborators, St. Dominic and St. Francis.

The Emperor and the Kings and Princes were at war with each other, they were at odds with the practices of the faith, they were in revolt with the authority of the Church.

Innocent III adapted the Augustinian principle of Jesus Christ being the King of Kings and Lord of Princes, Dukes, Marquises, of anyone who had power on earth, and therefore of having the Pope, the right, and the duty, to control their actions, so that it would be worthy of the authority received from God and in conformity with the moral and political interest of the peoples.

Many kingdoms made a spontaneous act of homage to him, recognizing his superior authority: Denmark, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Serbia, Bohemia, Aragon and Portugal, and received his help and protection.

Other kingdoms were in turmoil. The Swabian Henry VI, son of Barbarossa, had taken Sicily and Innocent III sent Gualtieri di Brienne to reconquer it.

After the death of Henry IV, the Empire remained with his young son Frederick II, whom his mother Constance of Hauteville entrusted to the Pope, and the Pope crowned him emperor in 1215.

England owes to Innocent III the first victory against the despotism of John the Landless and the birth of the Magna Charta Libertatum, which is the birth certificate of English democracy and is a Christian act.

France emerged victorious, after eight months of interdiction, from the moral disorders of Philip Augustus.

France has always been the country of contradiction in ardour: from there the Crusades started, there the heresies were born.

The Waldensian heresy was born there, from Peter Waldo, a heresy of the poor who remained rich in pride who intended to see the Church stripped of goods, images, confession, indulgences, extremes. Anointing, and even of Purgatory.

The heresy of the Cathars, or pure, or Albigensians, had spread from the city of Alby, who believed in two creators, one good and one bad, and wanted to deprive the church of other goods, among them the Sacrament of Matrimony, which prevented the so-called free love, free to be soiled with foul vices.

Innocent III had to resort to a real crusade against them, led by Simon de Montfort, and defeated them, winning the painful victory of arms.

With the 1st, 4th and 1st Crusades in the East, he stopped the advance of the Muslims and rebuilt the Latin Empire of the East, restoring the supremacy of the Pope over the Patriarch of Constantinople.

In the Fourth Lateran Council, in 1215, before more than a thousand dignitaries of the whole Church, he sanctioned the victory over the Albigensians, proclaimed the first meeting of the Greek Church, proclaimed the Fifth Crusade, and announced 75 canons for the reform of ecclesiastical discipline.

He died in 1216, but his work is not yet dead: he was one of the greatest pontiffs of the Middle Ages.

## XXIV . THE BEGGARS OF CHRIST

In ecstasy, at the end of the recitation of the Salve Regina, St. Bernard of Clairvaux exclaimed: 'O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria!' and that exclamation was so pleasing that it was added and remained as a seal of the beautiful prayer.

St. Bernard loved Our Lady with a most tender love, and learned as he was and immersed in high knowledge and in the contemplation of God, he allowed himself to be led by the hand by Our Lady throughout Europe, to make peace between princes and peoples and to reform the customs of the clergy and Christians: Our Lady helped him with continuous miracles.

This sweet singer of Mary never wanted to be a bishop, but was the counsellor of Pope Eugene III, a Cistercian Benedictine, like him, indeed his disciple; he gave the Church with his advice holy bishops, helped the Pope in the Second Crusade, founded several abbeys, and died in his beloved abbey of Clairvaux in 1153. Dante chooses him, in his Paradise, as the 1st highest guide.

The Benedictines had remained for seven centuries the leaven of the spiritual life, and the vigorous trunk had given strong branches: the Carthusians, the Vallombrosans, the Camaldolese, as well as the Cistercians.

But that leaven of prayer and penance, of study and work, of charity and poverty, had to be brought to the masses without impoverishing its source: the Benedictines had to remain Benedictines, in their monasteries, in their monasteries, in their hermitages, others had to lead the leaven to ferment the mass.

And the "Mendicant Orders" of St. Dominic and St. Francis were born, the bearers of Christ to the crowds, in the palaces and in the humble dwellings, under the aspect of truth on the part of the scholar St. Dominic, under the aspect of love on the part of the very enamoured St. Francis.

St. Dominic de Guzman, a Spaniard from Calahorra, where he was born in 1170, became the preacher of the truth, and almost lost his life when he was sent by Innocent III to resettle the Albigensian fanatics and rebels, who defended themselves as one defends a vanquished, with violence, and lost the first game.

Even St. Dominic trusted Our Lady more than her wisdom and spread the recitation of the Rosary throughout Europe.

The Order of "Preachers", who were later called the Dominicans, was born in 1215, and was so thirsty for truth and renewal of morals that six years later its friars were already crowding sixty houses, where in poverty they enriched themselves with theological science to enrich the Church and defend it from heresies.

St. Dominic elected the learned Bologna as the capital of his order and remained there until his death: from there he "sent" his friars throughout Europe, severe and serene preachers of truth. Death accompanied him to glory in 1221.

A year earlier he had met in Rome with St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis was twelve years younger than him and was of a very different temperament, but they recognized each other as brothers in love for Christ and for the Church and embraced each other tenderly. Their embrace continues over the centuries in the mutual love that the two Mendicant Orders continue to bear each other. The Poverello of Assisi did not preach poverty as conquest, he preached as absolute freedom from earthly hindrances in order to make himself like Christ in the whole extension of the Gospel, without corrections, as he used to say.

He was the poorest and freest of men, he bore within himself the pain of all creatures and at the same time the supreme joy of the anticipated possession of heaven as soon as he had given Father Pietro Bernardone the dress to put himself, naked of goods and love of himself and of his own will,

in the hands of the Heavenly Father, with a very intense love for the Heavenly Mother and for the sweet Christ on earth, the Pope.

He preached love by singing with joy, he brought peace by weeping over the greed of men, who were making war for a little of that land, even if in the form of gold and honors that he trampled barefoot, in humility, as a true great ruler.

St. Francis also soon gathered together a large family of Brothers or Friars, whom he wanted to be called "Minors", considering themselves the least of living beings, and jealously preserving them to Christ pure from the attractions of the world, in perfect poverty, chastity and obedience.

Animated by a missionary spirit, he participated in the Fifth Crusade to convert Muslims and seize the palm of martyrdom.

The beloved Jesus granted him the two gifts, together with the promise that his Three Orders would last until the end of the world, but he did not grant them to him in the desired form: the Muslims sent him free without martyring him and without converting, but with him they began to see Christianity in a different light and even today they remember him with veneration, and he had martyrdom with the Stigmata, which he carried until his death, which took place on the bare earth, joyfully, on October 4, 1226.

The Preachers and the Minors had their Second Orders of Sisters, and their Third Orders, dictated for those who remain in the world and want to live a holy rule of religious life: three Orders that continue to be a remarkable force for the Church and for the Christian life of the peoples.

**XXV .**  
**THE SPLENDOR OF THE DARK AGES**

In Poland, at Zielona Góra, the population rose up against the civil authority that wanted to transform the parish complex into meeting rooms and theaters: in those happy villages the transformation of churches into theaters, barracks and warehouses continues with that zeal that the defenders of the Eastern peoples keep alive over the years, without being able to defend them properly against the loving assault of God.

So we have theaters, moreover also in Italy, which were born churches, but it is more important to know that the modern theater itself was born in church, and is linked to the Medieval Sacred Representations, which for several centuries, from the ninth century, were performed in church, in support of the liturgical action, to give it greater prominence and dramatic vigor.

In the thirteenth century the theatre overflowed from the churches into the squares, which were splendid stalls (such beautiful squares have not been able to build them anymore), and overflowed with the 1st lauda which was a sacred ballad adorned with lyrical and dramatic elements, and the most beautiful certainly remained that of Jacopone da Todi, the Pianto della Madonna.

Then over the centuries the theater slowly detached itself from the liturgical elements and, then, even from the religious ones, but it declined as a spectacle, and even today, in this skeptical century, the success far superior to any other (a million spectators due to the impossibility of accommodating more) is obtained by the Sacred Representations of the Passion of Jesus in Oberammergau, which find their historical root in the Sacred Representations of the Middle Ages.

If the sacred popular theatre was born in the centuries that history insists on seeing coloured only with blood, robberies, extortions and crimes, it means that the people were profoundly religious and do not spread religion with violence, they spread with love and holiness which, in spite of everything, acted in depth and prevailed.

To return to Poland, they should know that it currently has seven universities with a total of seventy-five faculties and of these seven universities seven are state-owned, one, that of Lublin, is private, that is, it is Catholic, and still, with many difficulties, manages to live and maintain a high spiritual level in young people.

In our country, in free Italy, the situation is no different, because we also have only one Catholic university, as other Catholic nations have only one (the United States and other nations have a much greater number).

But in the dark Middle Ages the Universities were born in the church, too, drawing their distant sources from the Fathers of the Church, and spread the culture even "secular" through the four faculties then existing, Theology, Philosophy, Medicine and Law.

Modern painting, when it wants to rest the eye and elevate the spirit, returns to Giotto, the strong singer of the Christian poem, by means of choral pictorial representations: in Giotto religion is not an isolated fact, it is in the soul of the people, and what we have said of painting can be said of theater and science, it was born in the Church in the tormented centuries.

Modern poetry was also born in the Church, with Dante, and his wonderful poem is also a choral poem, in which "heaven and earth" take part, where earth means all the people.

Even the poem timidly seeks those distant paths. But the most superb and admired testimony of the nations in the Middle Ages is given by the stupendous Roman and Gothic cathedrals, the most beautiful things that civilization has been able to create in architecture.

It is a strange fate for the Church, in all centuries, and especially in these centuries, to enrich the world with the highest and most desirable goods even on the human level, and to be reproached for having enriched herself at the expense of peoples.

If we could make a list of the buildings, the institutions, the progress of culture, science, art, the civil order, even the reclamations, which the Church has patiently built and which the civil and secular world has appropriated, even where the Church openly fights, we would make an endless list.

But it is not in the spirit of the Church, and we have wished to note it fleetingly only in order to call the minds of the honest to a more serene judgment than the centuries of which we have spoken.

## XXVI . THE GUELPHS AND THE Ghibellines

A German Catholic writer said with regret some time ago that Germany has caused Italy and the Church the greatest number of troubles over the centuries, and perhaps he was telling the truth, without these German Catholics ceasing to be an example of discipline and attachment to the Church.

In the thirteenth century Germany gave us, as we have already mentioned, the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, all Christians, in the service of two different ruling houses.

In Italy the Guelphs and Ghibellines became Italianized and took on a different, more broadly political aspect, and since the Ghibellines had come to Italy with Frederick II and in the eyes of the Italians represented the arrogance of the emperor who rebelled against the Pope, the Italian Communes, which saw in the Church their great protector, became Guelphs.

On the other hand, the feudal lords, the nobles and all those who had already had the support of the Emperor and had to hold him dear, became Ghibellines.

Thus the Guelphs came to represent the new Christian and democratic people, which the Church supported, and the Ghibellines formed the conservatives of a feudal regime now in its twilight.

After the decline of the Ghibellines with the Empire, their roots, scattered throughout Italy, flourished again in the fourteenth century in the struggles that the municipalities began to wage gallantly among themselves and it happened that a municipality became Ghibelline only because its opponent was Guelph and the struggle had to be justified by changing the system of battlements on the walls to indicate a different political approach.

If, then, a municipality like Florence, which was Guelph, found it convenient to divide the interior as well, it sought other subdivisions in the same party, with the factions of the Whites and the Blacks, known to all for that sublime poet and unfortunate politician who found himself involved in it and who led him to be unjust even with the great Pope Boniface VIII.

Some time later Dante would also rehabilitate that courageous Pontiff who in 1294 found himself at the head of the Church distraught by the defense against the renewed assault of the Emperors, rulers and nobles on divine rights, a struggle that had taken on exasperated tones and advised his predecessor Celestine V, an old and holy hermit, to lay down the discouraged 1st tiara.

Boniface VIII was not discouraged and began his healing work from the city of Rome, which in the struggles between the Colonna and the other patrician families no longer knew who it belonged to and in many respects was no longer anyone's and was reduced to a compassionate state.

Boniface VIII imposed himself on these scorching families, reorganized the civil laws, helped the humble people and founded a university to nourish and straighten the intellect of the young.

Then he turned his gaze to the whole Church and to test its faith and unity he proclaimed the Jubilee Year in 1300, granting the Plenary Indulgence to those who had come on pilgrimage to Rome, to visit the Basilicas of Saints Peter and Paul with the desired conditions.

It was the first Jubilee and it was a triumph: the old consular roads were teeming with pilgrims who came, mostly on foot, from all over Europe and from all over the Christian world.

Rome seemed to rise to its ancient greatness. With the Bull Unam sanctam this courageous Pontiff re-established the primacy of the spiritual in the government of Christian peoples, but aroused the rebellion of the powerful, who wanted to recognize their own primacy above all.

His strongest opponent was the French king Philip the Fair, who had appropriated the goods of the Church and gave the papal legate, who had gone to ask him the reason, the usual hasty answer of the usurpers, that is, he put him in prison.

And he did not stop at that first gesture of royal prudence, but himself sent a Legate to the Pope, William of Nogaret, accompanied by an army (but how many these brilliant Emperors or Kings repeat themselves!).

In Rome the French army found the support of Sciarra Colonna, who was waiting for the opportunity to return master of the city and together they reached the old and intrepid pontiff of Anagni, his native city, where they took him prisoner and ordered him to abdicate.

Boniface VIII had received power from God, he does not give them, and not being able to obey men, he refused the intimation and remained a prisoner.

The people who esteemed and loved him, rose up, freed him and led him triumphantly to Rome, but just in time for him to express his gratitude to the Lord for having made him worthy to suffer for His Church and forgiveness to his near and distant persecutors.

## XXVII. AVIGNONE

The towers of the massive Palais des Papes awaken in the tourist who comes to Avignon a sense of respect tinged with sadness.

Avignon owes much to the Papacy, owes it more than four centuries of prosperous autonomy and not a little of the subsequent fortune, but the Church cannot boast of this rich capital of the lower Rhône, which recalls one of the most unhappy periods of its glorious and tormented history.

Clement V, the French Pope elected in 1305, did not have the courage to reach the 1st Apostolic See, where Nogaret and Sciarra Colonna, excommunicated, did not promise a triumphal welcome.

He thought of stopping for some time in Avignon, waiting for the clearing. Avignon was a fief of the Angevins, loyal to the Pope, and Clement V deluded himself that he was their guest and that he could freely govern Christianity from France.

But in France Philip the Fair still reigned, who was the true and insatiable master and used that fortune to maneuver the Angevins and the Pope together according to his desires.

He had long since set his rapacious eye on the Templars, a religious and chivalric Order that had arisen to defend the Holy Land and pilgrims, an order that had accumulated glories and wealth at the same time: Philip the Fair, greedy for the former and greedy for the latter, magnified some symptoms of spiritual relaxation of the Templars and began to persecute them, in the name of faith and the Pope, who tried in vain instead to stop his murderous hand.

Clement V remained a prisoner in Avignon until his death. His successor, John XXII, also French, was unable to free himself from that slavery and after him five other Popes, all French, made Avignon a forced Apostolic See, while the whole Church suffered and Rome had become a den of thieves.

Indeed, his successor, Benedict XII, did not feel safe even in that most faithful fiefdom, so sad were the times, and it was he who built the Palace-Fortress, which remains over the centuries to give testimony, with its useless greatness, to how uselessly men strive to build on a line different from God's designs.

John XXII had a new reason to regret his voluntary exile. A political treatise entitled Defensor Pacis had been written by Marsilius of Padua, which attributes to political authority the supreme power, above all other authority: all citizens are subject to the laws of the state, even the bishops, even the pope, who must be civil appointed.

We are all over again, as we see, in the struggle for the supremacy of power, with the intention of placing temporal power above the spiritual, and unfortunately the treatise of Marsilius of Padua is the first source of that supremacy of the state which will always make the Church suffer.

The treaty was a gracious gift into the hands of the impetuous Louis of Bavaria, who allied himself with the Ghibelline Lordships, succeeded the Guelph Communes, such as the Scaligeri of Verona and the Visconti of Milan, and came to Italy to be elected Emperor, certainly not by the Pope, but by Sciarra Coonna, master of Rome.

An emperor could not allow Rome to remain without a pope, but unwilling to call it the legitimate pope, who could not legitimize his undertakings, he elected one of his own in Nicholas V, a simple layman.

John XXII of Avignon had the power to excommunicate him and the excommunication was effective, putting an end to his raids and the government of the Antipope.

But Rome became more and more intriguing and did not earn it the popular flare-up of Cola di Rienzo, who managed to proclaim the Roman Republic and to work, with alternating aspirations and events, so that the Pope would return to Rona, but ambition betrayed him before he had succeeded and the people who had elected him to be and remain a tribune and not become a tyrant, he slaughtered him on the pretext of the tax on wine.

Instead, a young Sienese woman, also a commoner, but not elected by the people, elected by God, Caterina Benincasa, a Dominican tertiary, succeeded.

It was Pope Gregory XI, elected in 1370. St. Catherine had begged him several times in letters to put an end to the slavery of the Church and to return to Rome, to restore Rome to the Church and dignity to the Papacy.

He took advantage of the opportunity of an embassy of peace in the name of Florence, which had also become the Ghibelline Lordship, and went to Avignon, where he carried out his mandate successfully, but from where he did not leave until he had convinced the Pope, against the advice of the Papal Court, to come to Rome.

Gregory XI embarked at Marseilles with the escort of the Genoese galleys and made a stopover at the Lido of Rome on January 17, 1377, welcomed in triumph by the people, who found in the Pope the hope of a new return to life.

## XXVIII . THE WESTERN SCHISM

We are at the Western Schism. It is not a long-lasting schism - it goes from 1378 to 1417 - but it is of painful significance, because it is not caused by external violence, like others, and that of the current Chinese Church, it is instead operated by the cardinals themselves, who sacrifice the universal sense of the Church to national interests and ambitions.

It is an internal schism, without real heretics. None of the popes of this period, legitimate and illegitimate, commits theological errors, and the holy souls themselves find themselves divided in supporting the legitimacy of this or that Pope, so difficult has it become to recognize the truth.

It is a genuine product of the Avignon period. The Pope's controversial return to Rome was not enough to convince the French cardinals that Avignon had simply represented an exile of the Church and not a legitimate see: with Avignon those cardinals had believed they were acquiring a perpetual right to the election of a French Pope.

And on the death of Gregory XI they came reluctantly to Rome for the election of the new pontiff, and with greater reluctance, indeed with irritation, they listened first to the prayers, then to the threats of the Roman people, who wanted a Roman or at least an Italian pope.

The people had to force the conclave with a real assault in St. Peter's Square, without knowing that they had already obtained the election, if not of a Roman, of the Italian Bartolomeo Prignano, Archbishop of Bari, with the name of Urban VI.

The pope-elect was not happy. He was an austere man, one of those who wear the hair shirt with great fidelity but he could not impose it on the cardinals, not even in a moral sense, except with prudence and gradualness and he did not have these virtues to the extent he deserved.

The cardinals rebelled against him and elected, in Fondi, a new Pope, the Bishop of Geneva, with the name of Clement VII, declaring the election of Urban VI null and void because it was extorted with violence from the people, which was substantially not true.

Urban VI could not leave the chair of St. Peter and did not leave, and the French cardinals, with their new pope, did not oppose him, returned to Avignon.

The Church thus found itself having two Popes, with apparent good reasons for both, and was divided: Cardinals, Bishops and peoples remained faithful to the Pope of Rome; other cardinals, bishops, and peoples paid homage to the pope of Avignon, and in truth the rulers were not strangers to him, who have always had in history, with holy exceptions, a diligent concern to bring the faith into harmony with their own dominion.

In Rome and Avignon they remained divided, dividing the Church; even at the death of the two popes in their successors, but the split was too painful for the need not to be felt to try to settle it. An Ecumenical Council was needed and the Council could not be valid if it was not called and presided over by the Pope; but by which Pope?.

The cardinals thought they could overcome the obstacle by spreading the false opinion that the council had more authority than the pope, and they called it on their own account, at Pisa, where all the cardinals of the two obediences intervened.

The Council deposed the two reigning Popes, Gregory XII, the true Pope, and Benedict XIII of Avignon, and unanimously elected the Archbishop of Milan, Pietro Filargi, who was called Alexander V and settled in Bologna.

As was his duty, Gregory XII did not resign, nor did he want to give greater authority to the Cardinals Benedict XIII, and so the Church found itself having no longer two, but three popes at the same time.

The humiliation he received reinvigorated in consciences the rebellion against that unhappy state of affairs and more suitable measures were thought of to put an end to it.

The Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg took it upon himself to do so, inviting to a council in Constance, in 1414, eighteen thousand illustrious members of the whole Church, including all the bishops.

But such a large number continued to remain without authority and the true Pope Gregory XII intervened to give it to him, with a most noble gesture and with admirable humility, who with a Bull officially convoked the Council and as soon as the assembly was canonically made valid, renounced the Pontificate to leave it free to decide and to give an example to its antagonists.

The example was not enough but the two rebel Popes did not have a long life and one ended up in prison and the other locked up in a Spanish fortress.

The Council elected Cardinal Ottone Colonna with the name of Martin V and the discipline returned to restore unity and vigor to the Church.

Martin V remained in Florence for two years and in 1420 he reached his legitimate See in Rome. Rome had the appearance of a devastated city and Martin V had to begin by restoring order to the city, in order to be able to turn with more prestige a look of paternal and vigorous solicitude to the still aching members of the whole Church.

## XXIX . THE WARRIOR SAINT

Joan of Arc was born in 1412 while the civil war was raging due to the betrayal of Isabella of Bavaria who had handed over France to the King of England.

The people had created the legend that the Kingdom destroyed by a woman had to be redeemed by a virgin. The streets of Domremy, in the Vosges, where Joan was born and lived, were traversed by rival French soldiers, the Burgundians, who understood the English, and the Orleanists, who fought in favor of the legitimate French king, the Dauphin Charles VII., who had taken refuge in Bourges and was already thinking of taking refuge in Spain.

Giovanna was a simple and energetic girl, who had never gone to school, and spent her days helping her mother in the feminine works and her father watching the flocks in the pasture.

He spent his free time in church praying for the French who hated each other so that they would no longer hate and kill each other, and for the liberation of France from foreign domination and the rights of the true King.

At the age of thirteen, St. Michael the Archangel appeared to her in prayer, who ordered her to go to the Dauphin and encourage him to take up arms and fight because he was to reign over France.

Joan withdrew in fear, thinking of a deception, for four years she struggled against these visions and the "voices" of St. Catherine and St. Margaret martyrs, who encouraged and assured her that they would guide her.

At seventeen she finally obeyed and managed to overcome all the difficulties she encountered in presenting herself to the King, whom she recognized in the midst of the courtiers, without ever having seen him, and convinced him to hand over a small army to her.

On horseback, at the head of the soldiers, carrying the standard, he defeated the English at Orleans, Jargeau, Beaugency, Meung, Patay and Reims.

At Reims in the cathedral, the Bishop consecrated Charles VII King of France and Joan asked permission to return home, having now exhausted her obedience.

But the King Ia prayed so earnestly to continue to help him in the recomposition of the Kingdom that Joan agreed to go to the liberation of Paris: she was wounded under the walls and had to spend the winter at court, south of the Loire.

With the spring he mounted his horse again and reached the camp at Compiègne, received with enthusiasm and devotion by the soldiers, but the Burgundians treacherously took it and sold it to the English for money.

The English took her to Rouen with the decision to condemn her to death, but as good Englishmen they did not want to be the ones to kill her and prepared a regular ecclesiastical trial in the presence of Bishop Cauchon, whom they had on their side.

Joan was accused of heresy for the "voices" she claimed to hear and invited to deny them. She was subjected to a subtle mental torture with very difficult questions of theology, but Joan always defended herself, for long days, with impressive simplicity and wisdom, always asserting that she had obeyed God.

To the question: "Do you think you are in God's grace?" he answered: "If I am not there, God put me in it, if I am there, God support me".

He defended himself with the courage with which he had led the army to continuous victories, and to the other mischievous question: "Do you still hope that God will save you from the stake?" he answered: "Yes, I hope he saves me (the soul) and leads me to Paradise."

But she wanted to test the minds of her accusers and asked the Pope for judgment, which was naturally denied.

She was condemned as a recidivist and unrepentant heretic and was burned alive on the Old Market Square in Rouen on May 30, 1431, at the age of 19.

Twenty years later, in Rouen, Pope Calixtus III had proclaimed innocent and the English were preparing to return, defeated, to their homeland.

King Charles VII did not lift a finger to save his savior from the stake and when the fire was extinguished he felt the fire of remorse and was a convinced supporter of her rehabilitation.

She was canonized by Benedict XV in 1920. It is evident that God raised up St. Joan of Arc, certainly not in favor of one dynasty against another, but for the liberation of a believing and faithful people, whom the English, already infested with the heresy of separation, might have involved in their ruin.

The Church emerged strengthened in the century in which Spain was freeing itself from the Moslems and in the East the faith was being consolidated in Hungary and Poland, but movements of separation were also being prepared, and France, which had been a nation dear to the Lord from the earliest times of the Church, had to remain faithful.

Bishop Cauchon was guilty of this misdeed, but the Church remained free from it, indeed intervened to repair it.

It is the mystery of the history of the Church, which repeats the Passion of Christ in its best members.

### XXX . HUMANISM

This is the time of the popular Encyclopedias, as well as of missiles. Many come out and are given wide publicity. It is desired that every family has at least one, which represents the pantry of Culture, ready for every need.

That is, not really to all needs. If you take a closer look at advertising, you will observe that every encyclopedia is magnified for its content of Culture, Art, Science, Politics, History and whatever you want, less than Theology and Religion.

It may be that they are also a little bit there, Theology and Religion, but there is no mention of them in advertising, as if their presence disturbs the high dignity of the public.

It is desired that this varied dispensation of knowledge should be of interest to earthly man, without divine complications: it should affect the mind and perhaps even the bodily functions, but not the soul.

There is a fear of bringing man closer to God, and when we say human we mean what is detached from God, from Theology, from Religion, from the Church, as if in the middle there were a moat without bridges.

Do you know how long this separation between the human, according to the concept of secular culture, and the divine has lasted? It has lasted for five centuries and is the work of Humanism of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

What is this Humanism? It is a return to the study of the classical works, of poetry and thought, of the Greeks and Romans, which belong to a period before the coming of Christ and are pagan works.

Until the fifteenth century, culture was Theological, that is, it started from God and reached man, redeemed by the blood of Christ, in such a way that Religion guided the minds of the learned and the souls of peoples: the greatest philosophical work of the Middle Ages is the 1st Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas, and the greatest poetry is the Divine Comedy of Dante, a poem that sings la Theology.

The return to the table of the learned of pagan poetry and philosophy was not hindered, on the contrary it was favored by the Church, which has always appreciated and defended the works of man, when they are valuable works and bear witness to an era and a civilization.

Many of the works of the Greek or Latin classics would have been lost if Christian monks had not saved and transcribed them, and it was the crusaders who brought back to the West the love of Eastern culture.

There could not and should not be a contradiction between pagan poetry and Christian poetry, representing on the contrary a happy transposition of the poet's soul, nor between Greek and Christian thought, since a vision of the immortality of the soul is evident in Greek thought.

But the Church could not contain Humanism in what it was supposed to mean the recognition of the beauty and value of human works, in a sphere of intellectual and spiritual interest, which would serve not to dethrone, but to make more luminous the intervention of God in human affairs.

Humanism ended up fixing its interest on man and exalting the power of man, first detached from God, then even against God's interference in human affairs, and therefore against Theology, against Religion, against Church.

The value of the scholastic philosophy born of St. Thomas and of Dante's poetry was denied: the Middle Ages were called the era of obscurantism, although every work of culture that existed at the time, starting with the universities, was the work of those repudiated centuries; and even today we do not continue to call the Church obscurantist?

The Umaneranno detached from God became the dominant passion, today we would say the hobby, of the rich, or rather of the Lords, who competed to surround themselves with scholars, poets,

artists, and in this competition the Medici in Florence, the Sforza in Milan, the Este in Ferrara, and the other Lordships then reigning in Italy prevailed.

A Humanism that had returned to paganism could not fail to descend from the intellect to custom, and the courts contaminated by corruption could not fail to contaminate the peoples, who began to willingly leave the processions of penance to follow the orgiastic processions of bacchanals and carnivals.

The wind that swirled from above to below also struck the Church and there were not a few ecclesiastics who allowed themselves to be seduced by the formal beauty of pagan works in order to neglect the substance of the government of souls and even to make compromises of custom.

Fra Gerolamo Savonarola is the exasperated expression of that time, with the vehemence of his word against the corruption of morals, but also with the inflexibility of the conduct that led him to obstinate disobedience to the Supreme Pontiff and to death.

Meanwhile, Luther's heresy was spreading and it was this heresy that gave a jolt of awakening and called some men of the Church back to the mission of salvation, which was to energetically raise the human to the height of the divine.

**XXXI .**  
**THE RENAISSANCE**

A ruin already speaks of a people and its life, and much more does a Basilica, a Fortress, a Palace, a Sculpture and even a Painting.

The Figurative Arts have always given a good help to those who study the history of peoples, complementing what their culture and poetry narrate.

Humanism, transferred from culture to the figurative arts, produced new expressions of form that referred to ancient classical art and was therefore called the Renaissance.

The Renaissance Basilicas, with their sober and clear lines, can compete in beauty with the Romanesque and Gothic Basilicas, without however surpassing them: of the latter they are less mystical, they invite less to contemplation and more to conversation with God, they speak less of grace and more of reasoned faith, they glorify God less and more man.

The distinguished architects of this period are called Michelangelo, Brunelleschi, Bramante. Sculpture gives us the strength of Michelangelo and the grace of Donatello, both referring to human qualities not transfigured by the life-giving action of God, which is instead observed in Michelangelo's early works.

Painting follows the same process of descent from God to man, and the Madonnas have no more mystical grace than those painted by Giotto and Simon Martini, nor the incorporeality of Angelico's Madonnas: in Lippi, Michelangelo, Leonardo, Botticelli, and Raphael himself they become flourishing with corporeal humanity. Titian and Leonardo painted earthly matrons and Botticelli was enchanted by his pagan Venus.

All Renaissance art, although it remains largely religious art, testifies to this progressive transition from the concept of man deified by Grace to that of man exalted in his natural gifts and capable of expressing beauty in perfect forms.

In fact, there are two centuries, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, among the richest in masterpieces, often unsurpassed, but there is also sad testimony of the spiritual ruin produced by a contemplation of pagan life re-proposed to the people and re-become custom.

And yet the Church welcomed the Renaissance with as much confidence as she had welcomed Humanism, and the greatest geniuses of the time, from Michelangelo to Raphael, were able to fully express their personalities because they enjoyed the consent and help of the supreme pontiffs.

The Popes of this period have gone down in history as Popes of the Renaissance and we all know that it is not without tears that we can look at the stupendous achievements of Art of Popes who are not always irreproachable, not always equally dedicated to the care of the Church, not always worthy of the succession to the frank Fisherman of Galilee.

They are Popes with their greatness and their miseries, firm in the defense of the Truth but not so firm in the practice of the evangelical virtues, defenders of light and at the same time children of their time, often subject to the earthly interests of their families, splendid in culture and not so much in piety.

Such and such was the force of the pagan regurgitation of the Renaissance that it broke into the Throne of Peter, yet without being able to overthrow it or even to unhinge it.

Not all the reprehensible actions attributed to some of these Popes are true, but certainly the root of them is true, which casts a painful shadow in so much light, without the shadow prevailing.

Nicholas V led the Church from 1447 to 1455 and flooded Rome with men of letters and artists, to whom he made the gift of the Vatican Library.

Pius II, from Siena, was also a humanist Pope, but he also attempted a crusade, fought slavery and helped the Jews who had fallen into sad conditions.

Paul II popularized the classical works among the people.

Sixtus IV left his name linked to the beautiful chapel that bears his name, but he became entangled in his family's quarrels and nepotism, and under his pontificate the Inquisition of Spain was established with its harmful atrocities.

Alexander VI (1492-1503) is the famous Borgia Pope, not as dissolute as popular stories depict him, yet he too did not only defend letters and the arts, he also defended the freedom of the Church and took care of its apostolic development by sending missionaries to the new lands discovered by Christopher Columbus, and reinvigorated, mystery of souls! the cult of the Virgin.

On the tomb of the other famous Pope Julius II stands Michelangelo's Moses, to define him, and he was truly a great genius. He was responsible for many masterpieces by Raphael, Michelangelo and Bramante, but he had an adventurous life and became involved in wars that did not always benefit the superiority of the Church over the affairs of earthly princes.

The golden age of the Italian Renaissance takes the name of Leo X (1513-1521), grandson of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

Leo was a patron of Art and artists, remaining of moral and irreproachable customs, but he had the mistake of begging for the exaltation of his family.

He concluded the Fifth Lateran Ecumenical Council opened by Julius II and as the last Pope of the Renaissance he succeeded in reconciling the love of art with the defense and practice of the moral virtues, which greatly comforted those who felt a poignant need of it.

**XXXII .  
MARTIN LUTHER**

A lightning bolt led Martin Luther to the convent in 1505, at the age of 22. The lightning had fallen near him and frightened him, causing him to seek shelter for his soul in the Hermit Order of St. Augustine in the monastery of Erfurt.

It was a religious vocation driven by fear and could not be a true vocation. lively in wit and ardent in temperament, seven years later Luther was already a doctor of theology and a teacher at the University of Wittenberg.

The previous year he had been in Rome and had seen there what immediately appears to the eyes, not the profound value of things but their external boiling.

A false vocation boiled in his soul, and he felt the ardor of the reformer of the morals of others before he felt the humble necessity of reforming them in himself: he took aim at moral morals, theology and the Church, without finding the time to begin by fulfilling his strictest duties, the celebration of Mass and the recitation of the Divine Office.

Neglected the life of piety, he found himself alone, without the help of Grace, to fight the many and strong passions that enveloped his soul, and what happened to him happened to those who believe themselves invincible without the armor of God, he was overwhelmed and discouraged.

But he did not condemn himself and found it more convenient to condemn theology by asserting that it is impossible for man to observe the commandments of God. We are under the dominion of corruption brought by original sin, on which all evils through no fault of our own depend. Jesus suffered and paid for all sins, so the sins of men are destroyed and no longer exist. Faith in Jesus Christ is enough to save us.

A novelty like this, in a really corrupt time, was the match lit on the flaming foam of bad morals, and explains its rapid fortune. The question of Indulgences was only the pretext. Leo X, a man of letters and artist, wanted to make St. Peter's Basilica beautiful and promulgated special Indulgences in favor of those who contributed to it with monetary payments.

The preachers of the Indulgences did not always keep within the limits of freedom of conscience and forced a little dwarf, which was evidently not desired by the Pope, but Luther immediately grasped these excesses to condemn the Indulgences, the Pope and the Church.

He immediately had the support of the German princes, who aspired to free themselves from the authority of the Pope and looked with a greedy eye at the goods that the Church possessed in Germany.

Leo X sent Cardinal Cajetan to Luther with the task of reminding him of obedience, but to no avail. Luther now felt himself the prophet of the Reformation and wrote and preached sermons and theses against the Church of Rome without breath. He called the Pope << the Roman Antichrist >>, and burned the 1st Bull of condemnation in front of his students. Leo X, grieved by his obstinacy, excommunicated him.

The Emperor Charles V banished him from the lands of the Empire, but Luther managed to remain there under another name, continuing to write against the doctrine and discipline of the Church. His indictments on monastic vows managed to make the desert in many German monasteries.

Luther's revolt, which was religious without ceasing to be of national and social background, stimulated the revolt of the oppressed peasants, a snowball movement that submerged Germany and destroyed at the same time convents and castles, abbeys and fortresses.

Luther provoked him, then was frightened and said that the peasants were children of the devil and should be treated like the revolting ass.

Two hundred thousand were exterminated, and hunger sadly sprouted on the corpses and in the ruins to torment the living.

Not even that torment convinced Luther of error and he continued to attribute all evils to the government of the Church and to write against the Pope in an increasingly aggressive tone. Personally, he consoled himself by marrying a 26-year-old monk nun at the age of 42.

In 1529 the Pope tried to come to an agreement with the intervention of the Emperor, but the Lutherans protested against this double intervention and were henceforth called Protestants.

Another attempt by Charles V almost cost the Emperor his life, with no other result than to deepen the division.

In order to better spread his doctrine in opposition to that of the Church, Luther retired to Wittenberg, but he already had to intervene because of internal disagreements and divisions and it was precisely to settle one of these disagreements that in 1545 he went to Eisleben, his native town, where he was waiting for him and was surprised by his death on February 18, 1546.

Luther was born in a politically divided but Christianly united Europe and left with political evils aggravated by religious division, which the centuries have not yet been able to heal and for which the Church continues to suffer, pray and hope.

### XXXIII . THE PEACE OF AUGSBURG

This beautiful city of Bavaria did not deserve the affront of a peace concluded on the Body of the Church with a new saber that divided it again.

It was a city dear to the Church, as it has remained, moreover for its high merits, including that of having always been able to fight and resist the effects of division.

The city of Drusus became Christian and had its martyrs before Constantine arrived there with the banner of Christ, and even when the Emperors took away from the Bishops reducing their splendor they always felt their spiritual charm and considered themselves honored to link their name in some way to the city.

Unfortunately, Charles V was also among them. He was tired of wars, after having fought so much, in the absence of the Church, with his antagonist Francis I, another defender of the Church in intentions, perhaps, but not in works, not even in moral ones, and he proposed to the Lutherans, in 1555, the peace of Augsburg, when Luther had already been dead for nine years and his heresy showed no sign of dying. on the contrary, it was spreading to almost all the Christian peoples of Europe.

Charles V proposed the 1st Diet, the 1st truce, the first peace, and it was possible for him to obtain what he asked of the Lutherans, recognizing what they asked of them, and which was no small thing indeed.

They wanted every lay prince to be recognized as having religious power, with the obligation for his subjects to practice the religion of the prince, under penalty of injunction, to sell his property and go elsewhere.

General amnesty to those who had appropriated the goods of the Church, without taking away the goods badly acquired and legal recognition of marriages contracted by religious.

Charles V was able to rest from his long fatigue and in fact went to die penitent in a Spanish convent.

Lutheranism found its strength in the weakness of men, especially in those who believe that they have no weaknesses, as it is in the temperament of certain peoples, who believe themselves to be strong because they know how to take up arms and give themselves external discipline.

There Lutheranism worked better, although the very weakness on which it rested soon shattered it into innumerable sects.

According to the Lutherans, original sin has deprived man of the possibility of choosing between good and evil because it has polluted the whole man, even the instincts, which are already evil in themselves, while we know that the instincts, being ordered to the maintenance and multiplication of life, have remained good in themselves, even after original sin, and it depends on the use we make of it, according to our free will.

Not even Jesus, according to the Lutherans, is capable of healing us. He paid for us all, he covered the sins of all men, but he did not destroy them.

Grace no longer exists, God's action in us no longer exists, therefore the Mass remains useless, the sacraments remain useless, except for Baptism and Communion, which do not confer sanctifying grace, and penance, which is a declaration of sins without remitting them.

Sacred Scripture alone is the Source of revealed Truth and the Church has no right to interpret it, first of all because the Church as a hierarchy must not exist, being left to each faithful 1st freedom to understand the Bible, then because the true Church of Christ is invisible and the faithful must gather only to listen to the reading of the Sacred Texts (and who gives 1 authority to those who read the texts to read them and comment on them?) and to receive the sacraments (what is the use, if they do not give 1st Grace?).

The celibacy of priests and religious is abolished, the Church that instituted it being abolished.

Faith alone, and more than a faith a trust, is sufficient to guarantee eternal salvation.

It is easy to understand how, feeling freed from their personal responsibilities, indeed even invested with religious power, the princes immediately supported Lutheranism, also out of interest, thus being able to take possession of the goods of the Church, and once supported they spread it and imposed it on the people, in order to receive greater authority and freedom of command.

And it is equally easy to understand how the people also willingly adhered to it, because it did not require effort, but rather lightened or seemed to lighten the task of controlling and directing the instincts to their true end, which the intelligence itself justifies, as faithful servants of the cooperation of God's work in man.

But neither in Germany nor among other peoples has Protestantism had absolute mastery, because the law of God is engraved on the hearts, and the most sensitive and honest have always repudiated it and have appealed and worked for the reunification with the Church of Rome, which by suffering and praying smooths out to the Lord the ways of His return to all nations.

**XXXIV .**  
**THE UNFAITHFUL DEFENDER**

Every time there has been a desire to take away from the Pope the authority to guide the faithful, there has been the need to stand up to violence and the consequence of becoming murderers of the faithful themselves.

Henry VIII, who became King of England at the age of eighteen, in 1509, proved to be so faithful to the Church that he burned the writings of Martin Luther in public and earned the title of Defender of the Faith from Leo X.

He had married Catherine of Aragon and was a good husband, but as he matured in age he let the passions that power and wealth caress mature in him and he lost his head for Anne Boleyn, a beautiful court maid.

To have it with the papers in order, he pretended to tear up the existing ones, and if they were only papers! asking for the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, with the consent of the Pope.

The Pope replied with this simple phrase that has remained historic: "What we cannot concede to the last of Christians, we cannot grant even to the King of England".

The King of England did not obey the courageous determination of the Pope, he repudiated Catherine of Aragon and married Anne Boleyn, then the reason if he made a false mistake, by proclaiming himself supreme head of the English Church, detached from Rome.

Thus this painful schism had no doctrinal reasons, it had low-grade motives in the sentimental and immoral interests of this unrepentant "defender" of the faith.

The consequences were as mentioned at the beginning, persecution, and the soil of England was fertilized with Christian blood, including that of twenty-one bishops and five hundred monks. From this abundant sowing of martyrs two saints flourished again, Saint John Fischer, Bishop of Rockester, and Saint Thomas More, the King's Grand Chancellor.

Henry VIII, having lost the inner and outer balance of the Pope's support, no longer had a peaceful life: one after the other he took six wives, four of whom he repudiated and had two beheaded.

England was shaken by the royal hurricane and lost lives, monasteries, libraries, works of art, as well as the most precious gift of religious unity.

There was a return to Catholicism, after the death of Henry VIII, with Mary the Catholic, daughter of Catherine of Aragon, but in 1558, on her death, she was succeeded on the throne by Elizabeth, daughter of Anne Boleyn and the heretical strand regained the upper hand with the election as Bishop of Canterbury of Matthew Parker, invalidly consecrated by a Protestant bishop, and so the hierarchy of the Church was unfortunately disintegrated, never to be recomposed except with great difficulty and slowness in these centuries up to the present situation with the comforting revival of Catholicism throughout England.

In the Anglican Church formed by the schism of Henry VIII, the head of state has always been also head of the Church and several bishops are part of the House of Lords.

Although Henry VIII had fought Luther, the religion he wanted was based on the same Protestant doctrine, according to the 39 articles published by Queen Elizabeth in 1563

There is the same individual freedom of interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures, the same salvation assured only by faith, the same denial of the primacy of the Supreme Pontiff, the same reduction of the sacraments to Baptism and the Eucharist, without any more Mass, nor worship of the saints, nor Purgatory, nor therefore the obligation of suffrage for the dead.

They have a "book of common prayer", approved by the English Parliament, which moreover approves all ecclesiastical laws.

The Anglicans have retained their own hierarchy, with their bishops reporting to two ecclesiastical provinces, Canterbury and York, with the Archbishop of Canterbury recognized as Archbishop Primate, which is to say their Supreme Pontiff.

On feast days the 1st liturgical prayer and sermon, with the first Supper and 1st Communion, take place for Mass and our other functions.

Even the Anglicans, having lost unity with the Catholic Church, have disintegrated over time, forming Churches partly connected and partly separated and distinct from each other, with different doctrines and rites.

There are 1st High Church, 1st closest to the Catholic Church, even in ritual, 1st Low Church, more hostile to Rome, 1st Large Church which has expanded independent individualism, the Presbyterians or Puritans, without hierarchy, the Congregationists who do not recognize any authority, not even the civil one, the Baptists who have taken their name from the use of Baptism as adults by immersion, the Methodists, who tend to live in common, the Quakers, who meet in silence in bare rooms expecting individual inner inspiration or listen to the reading of the sacred texts by one of them, without hierarchy, and several other minor groups.

The Anglicans arrived before the Catholics in North America and spread almost all their sects and subdivisions there, but even that great people is taking prodigious steps towards returning to the one fold founded by Jesus and entrusted to the Roman Pontiff.

### XXXV. CALVIN

An Italian journalist interviewed the Bishop of Shanghai, Mgr. Tsiang Kia Shiu, a member of the "Chinese Catholic Church", which is opposed to the Roman Catholic Church, and therefore is no longer Catholic, despite the usurped name, but only Chinese and obedient to the communist government in Beijing.

The journalist asked him stringent questions and the poor bishop answered him as a government official would have answered, with the usual accusations against the Pope of oppressor of the peoples and the usual and puerile excuses of wanting, in agreement with the "people's" government, the true good of the Chinese people, a "true good" that condemns any religion to certain death, after having served as an instrument of transition,

Fortunately, the germ of Truth is not easily dried up and has not dried up even in China, where it is suffering the long maceration of its winter of martyrdom to blossom in the new inevitable spring, and we have taken this as a starting point to point out that there is nothing new in schisms and the estrangement from the Church obliges us to hate the Church, because without hatred Love is not abandoned.

Let's go back to the sixteenth century and find Calvin, another tenacious hater of a good, too high, lost.

John Calvin, a Frenchman who squandered the religious heritage of Switzerland, was born in Noyon in 1509 and died badly in Geneva, his field of devastation, in 1564.

He was born in a time of political and religious discord, and having studied theology without reaching the priesthood, he plunged into the religious controversies between Catholics and Lutherans, but his inner boat had no strong oars and the Lutheran current ended by dragging him towards the treacherous plain of heresy.

Impetuous as he was, he believed himself to be a strong fighter and in Paris he faced the Sorbonne, but those theologians defeated him and advised him to divert to other shores. He was welcomed in Ferrara by the Duchess Renée of France, who lost the integrity of his faith, and went back to Switzerland, which he found quarrelsome and therefore ready to listen to revolutionary words.

He became a Protestant pastor, but before passing through Strasbourg he had married Ida de Burelette, and stopping in Bern and Lausanne, he reached Geneva, which became his kingdom in the last thirty years of his life.

He succeeded in imposing his ecclesiastical ordinances on the council, which placed the city in his hands.

And it was the nervous and ruthless hands of the restless dictator. Deprived of the force of Truth, he resorted to the force of the police, which he charged with watching every citizen even in his private affairs and if these matters included loyalty to the Church, the citizen was indicted as an enemy of the homeland (is there anything new under the eastern sun?) and arrested.

This inflexible leader of the Protestant Reformation in favor of freedom of conscience, in just four years sent fifty-seven Catholics to death, all notable personalities, including the Spanish doctor Michael Servetus, burned alive. He condemned seventy-six others to exile, several hundred to forced seclusion in prison.

His doctrine is summarized in the work "Institutiones Christianae" and contains the free examination of Sacred Scripture, the Lutheran interpretation of original sin that corrupts man and makes him incapable of resisting evil, and since the work of Grace does not exist, trust in the power of Jesus is enough to justify us, without requiring any personal effort.

The Holy Spirit works inwardly in souls, without the need for the sacraments or the work of the Church, which moreover does not exist, being formed only by the elect predestined by God without their merits and therefore invisible.

Baptism and the First Supper remain, but as external signs and without real efficacy.

Sin arouses the wrath of God, but we are obliged to sin, and we must hope for His mercy, praying for the honor of being part of the elect, while continuing to sin.

Currently, Calvinist Protestants are divided into two branches, the English-Scottish branch of the Presbyterians and the Swiss and European branch of the Reformed. In all there are about 20 million.

While the hope of leading them back to the fold of Christ is growing, and for this we must pray, we are also obliged to be vigilant, because there are not a few Catholics whose souls are troubled by shades of Calvinism, because of a lack of deepening of Catholic doctrine and an insufficiency of prayer and interior life.

## XXXVI. THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

In these first twenty centuries the Church has always had a troubled life: she lives on earth, but she is not of this land, even if by right the land belongs to her by divine inheritance and she lives a tiring life, building the Kingdom of God with a human material that is very difficult and rebellious.

He has suffered and suffers direct persecution and the indirect and more fearsome persecutions of the reformers whom they impeach and condemn "believing themselves to be commissioned by God", as Jesus had warned.

The true reformers, not of doctrine but of morals, are the saints, who do not condemn anyone, but practice and preach the Gospel lived to a heroic degree.

The others have known nothing but to destroy: they have believed, by condemning the Church and detaching themselves from it, to create a more perfect Church, as if it were possible to perfect what is already perfect (no way leads higher to the summit, all lead down), and they have only succeeded, by coming out of the Truth, to worsen morals, to disintegrate, to practice hatred, to tear apart the crucified Mystical Body of Christ.

The saddest of these reforms is undoubtedly the Protestant Reformation, which succeeded in detaching half of Europe from the Body of the Church.

From its painful occurrence the Popes thought of a counter-reformation, in its double meaning of containing, fighting and repelling the Protestant Reformation, and of revising the customs of the Church which had partly given the Protestants a pretext in their work of separation.

But for half a century, in the first half of the sixteenth century, the attempts of the various Popes did not have good results, as we have already seen, also because of the obstacles of political divisions and wars.

A great Council was thought of that would bring together Catholics and Protestants and seek a possibility of understanding, without prejudice to the truths of faith, which no one could undermine.

Paul III finally succeeded, after having prepared it for a long time. He proclaimed it in Trent, in 1542, as a border city with the Protestant world, to make it easier for them to participate, but the Protestants all refused to participate.

The emperors, Francis I and Charles V, on their own, began to wage war again, and delayed its opening for three years, until the spring of 1545.

The opening of the solemn Ecumenical Council took place in the cathedral of Trent, with the participation of the papal legates, cardinals, bishops and generals of orders of the whole Church, but the political and religious storms made it difficult to establish it (it was in that period that Charles V's unhappy agreement of Augsburg with the Protestants, of which we have spoken) and forced its transmigration to Bologna.

He had a miserable life and Paul III died of grief in 1549. On his death the council suspended its sessions.

But the Council imposed itself and could not die like this. Julius III, elected in 1550, took it back. He resumed it in 1551 against the will of Henry II, King of France, who prevented his bishops from taking part, but the Jesuits and the Dominicans brought great help and things seemed to be going well, when Maurice of Saxony invaded the Tyrol and caused the interruption of the council, an interruption that was to be temporary. and that the rulers, who seem to feel great only when they have the sword in their hands, with their wars and their meddlings they managed to prolong for ten years.

The Council that was to give a new stability to the Church seemed not to find a stable home, but it was now the Council of Trent and was to end in Trent.

Pius IV reopened for the 10th third time, in 1562, and had the good fortune to entrust its fate to his Secretary of State Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, who managed to keep its leadership firm at sea. tempestuous of external discord.

The reopening took place solemnly with the historic procession from the Church of San Pietro to the Duomo, in which four legates of the Pope, Bishop and Clergy of Trent, and more than one hundred cardinals, archbishops, bishops, abbots and patriarchs took part.

This third and final period ended the following year, after nine sessions full of results, despite the attempted interference of politicians, each of whom understood the Catholicism of the Church not as universality but as confirmation of its political action.

On December 4, 1563, Cardinal Morone pronounced the closing words "Ite in pace", and not a few of those present, during the singing of the Te Deum, wept with emotion, so great appeared to them the work accomplished by God for His Church.

The very important deliberations, which we will examine briefly in the next chapter, were signed by 235 present.

## XXXVII. THE COUNTER-REFORMATION

We simple faithful do not remember enough that the soul of the Church is the Holy Spirit. For us Jesus is everything, the Founder, the Head, the Present in the whole Church and in every Tabernacle, mystically in the Society of the Faithful which is called precisely His Mystical Body and really, in His human and divine person, in the Most Holy Eucharist. †

Of the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, Jesus is the closest to our hearts, our intelligence and even our senses: he is the true food of the soul, the Master, the Brother, the Bridegroom.

The Holy Spirit dazzles us, even though He is sweet to the soul, and we almost leave Him to His function of light and guide that began in the Upper Room and is directed principally to the Apostles, that is, to the Hierarchy of the Church.

It is the Holy Spirit that we possess in Grace, the light and warmth of goodness, wisdom, love, but we prefer to adore God in Jesus, to pray to Jesus, to offer ourselves to Jesus, and particularly to Jesus in the Eucharist.

But this predilection of ours does not seem to displease the Father, if he has made faith in the Eucharist as a condition of salvation and the door of wisdom: he who believes in the Eucharist is in the light, he who does not believe in it is in darkness, even if his human works remain excellent.

Protestants have returned to darkness, who do not believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

The Council of Trent, counter-reforming this wretched reform, decreed the confirmation of the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist by means of transubstantiation, which is the transposition of the substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus without losing the appearance of bread and wine.

It follows that the holiness and irreplaceability of the Mass, which repeats Christ's sacrifice for the benefit of the Church and of the individual faithful, is recognized.

The Protestants had also protested against the authority of the Church in the interpretation of Sacred Scripture and Tradition as divine Revelation, and the Council of Trent reconfirmed as the Truth of Faith the work of the Church and her doctrine on the sacred texts and on Revelation.

The Protestants considered Christ's sacrifice sufficient for the salvation of the elect, and the Council dwelt with enlightened warmth on the value of Baptism, which restores human nature by cancelling original sin and making it capable of choosing between good and evil, restoring to man 1st freedom, and on the work of Grace, which is given to all the faithful in Baptism and maintained and increased by the Sacraments when it is merited by good works and it is necessary to save us, in a wonderful union of intent and love between God and the creature.

On the sacraments the Council lays down definitive norms, establishing their present number, nature, effects, and necessity according to their own state.

He declared marriage indissoluble, forbade its clandestine forms and subjected its validity to the obligation of the presence of the parish priest or his delegate, and two witnesses.

The Protestants had abolished faith and hope in purgatory, and the Council declared its existence a dogma of faith, necessary to purify and perfect what earthly life had left unfinished, because without perfection there is no Beatitude.

Against the Protestant Reformation he decreed the legitimacy and usefulness of the particular cult of the Virgin (hyperdulia) and of the glory rendered to God in the cult of Saints and Angels (dulia), even in the veneration of relics and images, is understood in due order and without fanaticism.

Bishops were obliged to reside in their sees, parish priests to explain the Gospel and the Catechism to the faithful.

The Protestants had abolished priestly celibacy, the Council treated it with great respect for human values and the demands of divine service, and established the obligation of priesthood to be free from bonds other than spiritual fatherhood.

The priest is the salt of the earth. Men can replace a king with a president, they can change forms of social coexistence, they cannot abolish the Catholic priesthood if they do not want to plunge into a barbarism much worse than the ancient.

Men need numerous and holy priests: the Council of Trent studied the highest problem with a sense of universal love and agreed on the advisability of establishing seminaries in every diocese to gather and cultivate nascent vocations in a holy way.

Many other decrees were issued in matters of doctrine and discipline, such as the reconfirmation of the authority of the Pope as the visible Head of the Church to whom all bishops owe obedience, the freedom of the Church from interference and national interests of kings and peoples, and many others. Such a great amount of work required regulation, for which the 1st congregation of the Council was instituted, which among other things published the Roman Catechism, the Index of Forbidden Books, and the Profession of Faith according to the Council of Trent. The Church emerged renewed and ready to resume the apostolic work for the slow reconquest of the detached peoples and the evangelization of the new lands that were being discovered.

Commentato [AS1]:

Commentato [AS2]:

### **XXXVIII.**

#### **The Jesuits**

The Jesuits are in the Church like the shock troops in war, feared, attacked, outraged by the adversaries, honored, admired, and feared by the other departments of the same army.

They have always had a difficult life, at times decidedly heroic: they have more than eight hundred martyrs, and they suffered the first suppression from 1773 to 1814, called and driven out, glorified and vilified, a little bit in all Catholic nations, according to the moods of the times and of the rulers.

Today they are one of the most luxuriant and saintly battle-hardened forces of the Catholic Church, they are spread all over the world, even in the most distant mission lands, and where they arrive, hospitals and schools are born, universities are erected. The Truth shines in the darkness of the unfaithful and pagan world in the sweetness of a limitless Charity.

There are over twenty thousand of them on the five continents, divided into Provinces, they have marvellous works in every Province, they publish over fifty cultural magazines in defence of the Church, dealing with every topic of life and science in the light of Catholic doctrine.

In Rome they have the Biblical Institute and the Gregorian University that has given the Church enlightened Bishops and Popes: they publish *la Civiltà Cattolica* which orients on religious and social problems.

They were born in the sixteenth century, the century of the Counter-Reformation, which leavened the whole Church and gave life to new Religious Orders among which the Jesuits are undoubtedly the most important.

It was founded by Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish knight, born in 1491, skilled in the sword and generous of soul.

In Pamplona the knight Ignatius, while defending his homeland against the French, was deeply wounded in the leg by a splinter of a cannonball.

The wound forced him to a long convalescence and boredom drove him to search for books. So it was that he read a *Life of Jesus* and the *Golden Legend of the Saints* and was made to compare the Emperor's militia, of which he was a member, with that of the King of Kings. He found an unbridgeable distance there.

He meditated on it for a long time and recovered, determined to leave the earthly militia for that in the service of Heaven. In the meantime he left the sword hanging from the altar of the Virgin of Monserrato, he dressed himself in the habit of the penitent and begging reached the monastery of Manresa, where he retired to do penance and grow in grace and wisdom.

He wanted to go to the Holy Land to liberate the Holy Places not with the sword, but with the preaching of the Truth to the infidels.

It was not possible for him and he had to remain in Manresa, where he built the framework of his Spiritual Exercises, the work that was to conquer and reinvigorate armies of souls over time.

He was then able to go to Palestine in 1523, but they sent him back to his homeland and he stopped in Barcelona to study Latin, philosophy and theology, as well as to teach and preach.

His eagerness as a conqueror led him to Paris in 1528, to deepen his theological studies, and his zeal made him and six other students - Peter Fabro, Francis Xavier, James Laynez, Alfonso Salmerone, Simon Rodriguez and Niccolò Bobadilla - make a pact to devote themselves, free from any other commitment, entirely to the cause of the Church, with the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. adding to this that of the conversion of the infidels and of an unconditional obedience to the Pope, accepting no dignity and honors except by an act of obedience to the Supreme Pontiff.

They drew up a draft of the Rule and formally the Society of Jesus, called the Jesuits, was born, with its spirit of militia of the Truth that Paul III approved with the Bull of September 27, 1540.

Having founded the 1st Society and after having elected Ignatius as their General, with full powers, in an iron discipline of military spirit (a Jesuit does not reach the priesthood before the age

of 32 and after an exceptional disciplinary and doctrinal preparation) the founders were sent by the General to the various districts of Europe, especially in those devastated by the Protestant Reformation, managing to regain Southern Germany in a short time.

St. Francis Xavier, on the other hand, left for the Indies and Japan, carrying out that missionary work that still amazes the world. Bobadilla defended the Church in the Diets of Worms, Regensburg, Augsburg. Il Laynez participated with Salmeron in the Council of Trent, bringing a notable contribution of doctrine.

The Catholic Counter-Reformation has had a contribution to the Jesuits which shows that Christ truly never abandons His Church and provides it with the means adapted to the time and need.

St. Ignatius founded in Rome an Institute for the conversion of Jews, one for the re-education of wayward women, another for young girls in danger, and for the increase of doctrine the Roman College and the Germanic College.

It is a doctrine that becomes the bread of wisdom and knows how to offer itself to all, in the Spiritual Exercises and Retreats for Workers, in the Marian Congregations and in the Missions to the People, in the Apostleship of Prayer and in devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Saint Ignatius died in Rome in 1556, leaving the company already established in thirteen provinces, with a thousand adherents divided into one hundred houses and colleges, and the imprint of his chivalrous spirit that has never faded over the centuries.

**XXXIX.**  
**THE OTHER ORDERS**

Why did several new Religious Orders arise in the sixteenth century? Answer 1a is given by the two words, "Order", which means "Obedience to a Rule and a Discipline", e "Religious", which means service of God and of the Church".

The Protestant storm had overwhelmed other orders, but above all it had weakened the general order of the Church, which the Counter-Reformation wanted to re-establish, and the necessity of this new order was universally felt, as we have seen.

It is understandable how the choicest spirits, under the life-giving breath of the Holy Spirit, accepted the interior invitation to collaborate. in an effective and evident form to the rebirth of the Church.

We mention the main ones, sorry that we cannot accommodate them all in the brevity of an article.

The founder of the Congregation of the Oratory, which was called by him of the Filippini, the Florentine transplanted to Rome St. Philip Neri, witty and cheerful, who by means of the musical Oratory knew how to descend among the people and their Sacred Representations to rise with the people, through musical art, to the heights of heavenly contemplation.

The Congregation of the Oratory is concerned with and concerned with good ecclesiastical culture as an indispensable means of spiritual elevation, the education of young people, the conversion of sinners, and assistance to the needy.

The life of St. Philip Neri flourished with tasty anecdotes, which are like festive flowers on a fertile ground of great piety, a solid ascetic formation, perfect humility and a most intense charity. His ecstasies are also little known. He instituted the "Visit of the Seven Churches", which had a particular significance in Rome and which has since become universal. Filipinos have flourished today in many nations, even in distant mission lands, keeping intact the spirit of the founder, who transformed the sad laughter of corruption into the joyful laughter of the pure soul.

The Clerics Regular of St. Paul or Barnabites (from the Church of St. Barnabas in Milan, where their founder rests) have a more severe tone. St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria, who founded them, is not Florentine, he is from Cremona; he does not have Tuscan wit, he has constructive Lombard reflection, but the root of holiness is the same eagerness, the desire to lead the clergy and the people back to a more exemplary conduct.

St. Anthony Mary Zachariah wanted to lead them there by means of penance, preaching and missions, a high education and a strong religious education.

Today the Barnabites have homes in Italy, France, Austria and other nations and are dedicated in a special way to the education of young people, the fixed term of social becoming.

The Piarists, a popular indication of the Congregation of Pious Schools, were born from the great apostolic heart of St. Joseph Calasanz, a Spanish gentleman who came as a pilgrim to Rome and was so struck by the miseries of the Catholic Center that he decided not to return to his homeland and to devote his life to the education of the children he met in the streets of Rome and to the help of the hungry, becoming a beggar with them.

The popular schools of the Piarists, widespread in the Catholic world, have done and are doing the Church a great good, spreading wisdom and virtue with an art that cannot be only human.

Confession, which is par excellence the sacrament of love, regained vigor through the work of the Theatines, founded by St. Cajetan of Thiene and Pietro Carafa (who before being elected Pope with the name of Paul IV was Bishop of Chieti, in Latin Theatis, and therefore "Theatines" his religious).

The Order of Confession and Preaching had a rapid expansion on both sides of the Alps and also bore excellent and numerous Bishops.

Beyond the Alps, in the luxuriant land of France, the figure of St. Vincent de Paul grew in spiritual stature and fame, the Founder of the priests of the Mission or Vincentians (from their Church of St. Lazarus in Paris), the giant apostle of Charity, also founder of the Daughters of Charity and the Ladies of Charity as well as informant in the following centuries of numerous works of charity, among them the 1st Society of St. Vincent de Paul for the 1st visit of the poor, founded in the last century by Frederick Ozanam, but taking its name and spirit from this giant of the spirit.

In France there was the King, there was the Court, there were the Nobles, and on the misty background there was the great French people, suffering and abandoned, there were the scarce parishes of holy clergy.

St. Vincent de Paul annulled social distancing in himself and led the hungry people to the palace in his person, taught the parish priests the wealth of poverty for love of Christ and the poor, brought the convicts back to the dignity of children of God.

The Vincentians make use of the Missions to the People to spread the spirit of charity of their founder. They have numerous houses in France, Italy, and other Catholic nations.

This brief review shows in the variety of temperament of the holy founders the unity of the spirit, aimed at the rebirth of the Church in the renewal of morals.

## XL JANSENISM AND THE SACRED HEART

The Church, which brings peace and finds war, had no peace even in the seventeenth century.

The Evangelical Union, established among the Protestants, led to that Thirty Years' War which ran from 1618 to 1648, which impoverished and depopulated the nations. Germany was reduced from twenty million to seven million inhabitants, and England took her Catholic King Charles I Stuart to the scaffold.

The Protestants had the support of the French Cardinal Armando de Richelieu, minister of Louis XIII, who took advantage of the religious war to lead France to the domination of Europe.

The war was won by the Catholic League, with the support of the Habsburgs, but the peace concluded in Westphalia was won by the Protestants, who were legally recognized in many nations.

In 1643 Louis XIV, the Sun King, ascended the throne of France, the King who was able to bring the monarchy to a splendor that France had never enjoyed, but was a sun that burned with ambition.

Louis XIV, the Catholic King, never made open war on the Church on the religious level, but he did so on the political level, which as always also affects religion.

He did it by fighting the Habsburgs while they were engaged in the war against the Turks and he did it by Gallicanism, a religious movement promoted by French Bishops, which tended to take away from the Pope the primacy over the Church of France, transferring it to the Bishops, to the Councils, and even to the people, under the tutelage, that is, under the effective authority of the King, of that great King who used to say "I am the State" and placed the State above all other authority, including the spiritual one.

The Sun King died in 1715 and his long reign was a reign of real splendor for literature and the arts, for the magnificence of the court and for the prestige of France, but it was also a reign of continuous wars that caused so much mourning to Europe and so much pain to the Church.

Gallicanism, which he had already repudiated, after it had been condemned by that holy pope who was Innocent XI, died definitively with him.

The corruption of morals, which accompanies every human splendor not coming from solid moral virtues, favored if not provoked the development of Jansenism, which takes its name from Cornelius Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres.

Jansenism misinterprets St. Augustine's doctrine on salvation and deprives man of the freedom to decide between good (delight of heavenly things) and evil (delight of earthly goods), asserting that God gives some the first delight and destines them to paradise, while he leaves the majority in the delight of the flesh and condemns them eternally.

This erroneous interpretation, fostered, as we have said, by the disgust that the best men had for a very relaxed Christian life, led them to give themselves to an austerity that produced the opposite excess, to the point of not approaching confession even after weeks and months of penance, even public and not for exhibition, but because that testimony was required, and to nourish themselves with the Eucharist rarely. not feeling worthy of this gift except in a state of purity of feelings that is difficult to achieve.

The Jansenists reasoned like this: "I don't know if I will be chosen, but I act as if I were, then deferring to God's judgment."

The Jansenists had their spreading centre in the nuns' monastery of Port-Royal, after the Jansenist nuns had retired to Paris. Illustrious men were Jansenists, such as Pascal, Racine and many others.

This heretical doctrine that took away confidence in God was condemned by several popes, Pius V, Urban VIII, Innocent X, Alexander VII, but it continued to disturb the life of the Church and it took a supernatural intervention to eradicate it.

An eminent doctor of the Church, St. Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, the city that had been the fiefdom of Calvin, a man of great doctrine, a courageous defender of the Truth against the rigorism of the Jansenists, preached with the power of sweetness, referring to the true evangelical spirit.

He founded the Visitandines with St. Jeanne Frances Fremiot de Chantal and it is precisely to a Sister of this Order, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, that Jesus revealed how we had to return to the "New Commandment", that of Universal Love, which works and hopes in the salvation of all men and has his Divine Heart as its symbol and as an effective instrument of peace and salvation. 1st Devotion to this Heart, pierced for love of all men and a burning furnace of charity.

This was the best response to the rigorism of the Jansenists and the confirmation that the Church has the mandate of Love, which it cannot fail in any age and for any other social condition.

## XLI THE VICTORY OF THE ROSARY

The beautiful devotion to Our Lady, of the centuries of St. Bernard, St. Dominic and St. Francis, had been weakening, mainly through the work of the Protestants, who denied her divine motherhood.

But Our Lady could not forget that she was not only the Mother of God, but also the Mother in Jesus and of all men.

And it raised up two Marian Popes, St. Pius V and Innocent XI. These two Popes found the Church invaded and surrounded by many enemies: within the Church, the monarchs, while wanting to protect it, tore it apart fighting each other and hindering it in its spiritual kingship; outside the Church, the Protestants and the fearsome and terrible Turks.

The Turks were among the most battle-hardened and fanatical Muslims, and they regarded the destruction of Christianity as the holiest of works.

They did not cease to attack the Christian nations, in Asia and Africa, but their greatest ambition was to subdue Europe in order to remove the Roman leaven from Christianity.

Fortunately they used the tactics of aggression, but they had no great strategic plans, and were more favored by Christian discords, especially among princes who left their defenses exposed, than by their own warlike skill.

But they did so much ruin, even with those disorderly assaults, taking away as slaves all the Christians whom they could not kill in battle: the slave yielded more to their cause than the slain, as spoils of war.

Twice they were really dangerous; The first was by sea, in 1571. They had more than a hundred armed ships, and the previous year they had taken the island of Cyprus; flaying alive his valiant Christian defender Marcantonio Bragadino, and aimed at Italy and Spain, favorite lands of their raids.

Saint Pope Pius V used a double strategy, an earthly one, managing to bring together Catholic Spain and Catholic Venice for the preparation of a Maritime Crusade; and the Knights of the Orders of the ancient crusades adhered to it, and were bravely brought.

The second strategy was spiritual: St. Pius V entrusted the task to Our Lady and ordered the whole Church to recite the Rosary.

The faithful responded fervently in all Catholic nations, and the Christian fleet sailed under the command of Don John of Austria, son of Charles V.

It was a small fleet going against a large and invincible fleet; Without the weapon of faith, there was no hope that a single one of the fighters would return to his homeland.

The clash took place in the waters of Lepanto on October 7, 1571. The Turkish Armiraglio Ali' had his ships placed in order of battle, inciting his men to an easy victory.

He was defeated and lost his life. His men were seized with dismay and those who survived remained prisoners with their ship. The Crusaders captured more than a hundred Turkish ships, freeing twelve thousand Christian slaves.

It was a prodigious victory, reminiscent of the ancient victories of the people of Israel, one against a hundred, whenever God was with them.

St. Pius V, knowing full well that the victory was to be attributed to Mary, instituted a feast under the title of Maria SS. della Vittoria, and his successor Gregory XIII transformed it into the Feast of the Rosary, fixing it on October 7th.

The second great Christian victory against the Turks came almost a century later, on September 12, 1683.

The Habsburgs, who defended themselves against the Turks, had to defend themselves even behind their backs against the Catholic Louis XIV, and the Turks, who had invaded Hungary, were already under the walls of Vienna.

Innocent XI saw the Church in grave danger and employed the twofold strategy of St. Pius V. He convinced John III Sobieski, King of Poland, to join the Habsburgs, and the other rulers to prefer union to discord.

He convinced all the faithful to invoke the Most Holy Name of Mary, and the combatants, before preparing for battle, to approach the SS. Sacraments .

Vienna marked the second astonishing victory of Mary against the Turks, who, although far superior in numbers and combative ferocity, were defeated, and the Catholic nations remained free.

This great victory gave rise to the Universal Feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary, again through the work of Blessed Innocent XI, and which is celebrated on September 12 in memory of that event. The feast of the Rosary became universal after another victory over the Turks by Emperor Charles VI on August 5, 1716 with the 1st liberation of Corfu. Leo XIII, saddened by the events of the Church in the last century, ordered the public recitation of the Rosary in the Churches, and even today the Rosary remains an invincible force of the Church. Lately the Holy Father, speaking to His Excellency the Cardinal Vicar of Rome, once again indicated its liberating power.

## XLII THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The 1700s began, for Italy, with the 1st flame lit by Pietro Micca, who saved Turin and built the Basilica of Superga. It was the wars of succession that once again upset this great and unhappy Christian region of ours which is and will remain Europe, whatever cataclysm may occur.

For the Church, the eighteenth century began with the Bull of Clement XI against the Jansenists, who had arisen, as we know, from a deep state of uneasiness of the populations, whom religious and dissolute principles oppressed.

Another century of travail was being prepared for the Church and Europe, which was to end in the massacres of the French Revolution.

Starting from the right principle that all authority comes from God, it was easy to blame God and His Holy Church for the misdeeds of those who held authority, demeaning it to their personal aims and therefore stealing it from God and the Church: thieves of authority have always been the most dangerous and the most harmful to the life of nations.

The Church was seen in the Prince, even if he was openly opposing it, and the oppressed peoples did not know how to distinguish between legitimate authority and that which, by betraying its mandate, became illegitimate.

But the peoples would not have come to rebel against religious authority on their own, if men of genius and culture, also betraying the authority of knowledge, had not pushed it to it.

In the previous century, the Englishman Locke had spread a naturalist philosophy that gave more value to the senses than to reason, to reason more than to faith, to science more than to theology.

Men, who had been accustomed for centuries to receive the light from the heights of theology, were invited to seek the enlightenment of knowledge in nature, in the senses, in their own reason.

That philosophical movement was called the "Enlightenment," and every human problem added the appellation of "natural" to distinguish it from the supernatural: natural philosophy, natural law, natural science, and even natural religion.

The supernature and existence of the immortal soul was denied. God was not denied, who remained a God, vague and isolated, without dogmas and without revelation.

Gian Giacomo Rousseau, who got rid of his children by taking them to the "foundlings" where many died at an early age, taught in his Emilio, a son born of his mind and his pen, that man is naturally good, but that put together with others, in society he becomes bad, because society is badly guided.

In his "Social Contract" he teaches the remedies in freedom: of individual conscience from all dogma and belief ("free" thought), in the equality of citizens and in the sovereignty of the people: there was already enough in preparation for the French Revolution.

It is not easy to understand how by putting together ten good people we become bad (where does evil come from?), but they are attractive doctrines that make fortunes in unprepared souls.

Another acrid and pungent destroyer of Religion and Morals was Voltaire, the most famous of the Enlightenment and the most inconsistent of the philosophers, who used a fascinating spirit to spread the idea of the obscurantism of the Church, managing to devastate not a few consciences, even after his death, a sad and desperate death.

From 1751 to 1780 the volumes of the Encyclopedia, the great dictionary of the sciences and arts, were published, the firstborn of the subsequent efforts of similar works that had the task of spreading philosophical and scientific knowledge among the unlearned.

The compilers of the Dictionary, who called themselves Encyclopedists, and included Rousseau and Voltai the King, were directed by the skeptic D'Alembert, and strove to destroy in minds and souls every religious belief, killed by philosophy and science, naturally enlightened, by the force of the senses and reason.

In the century of earthly enlightenment, Freemasonry also spread, born in England as a guild of Masons without anti-Catholic aims, and became the anti-church in France and Italy, with its formulas and rites.

The peoples, impelled by these currents of thought, demanded constitutional and social reforms, and instead of seeking genuine support in the Church, they began to consider her as the enemy of progress and reforms, despite the fact that true progress and real reforms, such as public education, the defense of freedom and family wages, the free care of the sick and the weak, The liberation of slaves and equality between peoples, the dignity of work and of the worker, had sprung from its bosom.

It is the century that begins the detachment of the popular masses from the Church. God had created the erect man so that he could look at Heaven, but men tired of looking at it with short-sighted eyes because devoured by pride, pride and passions, invited the masses to turn their gaze downwards, to bend towards the earth, to become slaves again of violence, brute force, error, science taken from God, atheistic capitalism, of the materialism that will bear fruit for ruthless Marxism, in search of a well-being that in other ways would have been real and consoling.

But God also guides men through their errors and knows how to derive advantages from them to the building up of His kingdom of justice and love, and the Church offers, works and waits with supernatural hope in His divine commission.

### XLIII THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Forty thousand parish priests from all over France, poor among the poor, had remained the sole support of the people, while Louis XV, a dissolute king, reigned, who was dissolving the moral patrimony of the nation.

Those parish priests, who lived in hardship, broke the wheat bread and the catechism bread for the people, with relief and schools, without asking for anything.

St. Joseph Benedict Labre traveled through France as a very poor pilgrim to console and encourage the poor, and in the same corrupt court lived the virtuous Queen Mary and her holy daughter Marie Louise, who became a Carmelite.

The religious orders gave an example of probity, faith and generosity, but the people suffered too much, and those who suffered for a long time no longer knew how to distinguish and listened to tempting voices, even if they were deceptive.

The Revolution was in the air, prepared by the Encyclopedists, led by Diderot, Voltaire and Rousseau. It could have been ideally led by those forty thousand parish priests, with the Bishop of Marseilles, Henry Belsunce and the Bishop of Amiens De La Motte, courageous invocations of Justice, without bloodshed, but the people do not know their strength and do not know that violence is their weakness and their condemnation.

He was enticed to violence by the doctrines of the Enlightenment and by the comparison with the lives of the rich, of those nobles who so easily betray their nobility and who then amused themselves with Sicisbeism, which was an elegant corruption.

Nobles were not a few bishops and prelates, who carried the vice of their people in their blood and hoarded the best goods, leaving the humble clergy in misery.

Their ecclesiastical dress indicated them as the first responsible and they were easy targets for the enemies of the Church and enemies, moreover, also of the people they called to the rescue.

In them the Church was indicated, not in the priests and in the holy bishops - who were there and numerous! - and in them religion was condemned.

The people listened to these voices, and a revolution was arrived at that only the most recent communist revolution has surpassed in ferocity.

Let them not repeat the history of the French Revolution, which began under Louis XVI, a king who was well disposed towards the people but not of strong character, and who made concessions now powerless to stop the revolt.

The king, as we know, convened the States-General, composed of deputies of the nobility of the clergy and the people, but the representatives of the third estate, that is, of the people, withdrew and convened on their own account, together with others of the clergy and nobility, a National Assembly to give the state a new constitution.

The king intervened and obtained that the Estates-General were recomposed and formed a Constituent Assembly, which met on 17 June 1789.

But the people were impatient and on the following 14 July they occupied the 1st Bastille and established the 1st National Guard.

The Constituent Assembly promulgated a Declaration of the Rights of Man, which abolished privileges and established the equality of all citizens, with freedom of worship, speech and the press.

By a Decree of secularization of ecclesiastical goods, the Church lost all its goods, and the dissolution of all religious Orders and Congregations followed.

Like all revolutions, which begin by attempting to destroy the faith and do not succeed, the French Revolution felt the need of the support of religion and promulgated the civil constitution of the Clergy, that is, it removed the Clergy from the sovereignty of the Church and subjected it to that of the State.

Pope Pius VI condemned, as he had to condemn, this Civil Constitution, and the result was an open struggle between the Church and the political power.

Everyone knows the massacres of bishops and priests carried out by the revolutionaries in the following years, led by the Jacobins.

The National Convention in 1792 proclaimed the 1st Republic and the following year the French led their last king to the scaffold, who died declaring himself innocent of the crimes charged against him.

The Republic abolished religious festivals and believed that it could change people by changing the names of the months of the year and their meaning.

The triumvirate Danton, Marat, Robespierre instituted the regime of Terror, which swallowed thousands of victims and finally swallowed the triumvirs as well, together, unfortunately, with bishops, priests, men and women religious.

Nine thousand priests were imprisoned or deported, as far as the deadly French Guiana, and another eight thousand were joined by the Revolution in Belgium and even in Italy. Pope Pius VI himself lost his life, and we will see later. Whoever affirms that the French Revolution opened the way to civil progress against the feudal power of the nobles and the Church commits a grave error, which the French bishops have recently recalled with regard to the new travails of France, namely, that violence does not bear fruit of good or progress, but progress is a force inserted by God himself into the human soul and defended and strengthened by the Church in every age. despite the deficiencies that some of its members may manifest.

Without the French Revolution, Europe today would not have been less civilized, it would have been so to a greater and more organic extent, as it is in the spirit of the Church, Mother of civilization and true Progress.

#### XLIV NAPOLEON AGAINST TWO POPES

"There is no more pope! it seems that Napoleon exclaimed at the death of Pius VI, and the exclamation presupposed a logical consequence: "I will be the true Pope in the guise of emperor".

Even Napoleon would have gladly done without the Church, but it was the only force that his sword could wound without ever seeing it expire, and there was no other hope left for him than to subdue it.

The first clash between Napoleon, the young general of the revolution, and the old intrepid Pope Pius VI took place in Rome.

Napoleon commanded a punitive expedition sent by the Directory under a pretext and managed to force the Pope to surrender, with the 1st peace of Tolentino in 1797. The Church lost Avignon, Bologna, Ferrara, 1st Romagna, and six hundred codices of value and works of art, which went to enrich the Louvre.

The following year the French, under another pretext, occupied Rome again, proclaimed the Roman Republic, sacked the Vatican and took the Pope prisoner, to force him to abdicate.

Pius VI was 83 years old, but he did not allow himself to be intimidated: "I am Pope and I will die Pope."

He only asked to be allowed to die in Rome, but they replied that he could die anywhere, and they locked him in a carriage to take him into exile in France.

The journey lasted fifteen months, which included two winters, until the French had the satisfaction of finding a dying man in their hands.

Pius VI died in Valencia on August 29, 1799, forgiving his persecutors who did not forgive him for being Pope and buried him without honor. It took three years for his bones to be transported to Rome, where they were buried in St. Peter's Basilica.

Meanwhile, Napoleon's hopes of succeeding the last Pope had been disappointed: a few months after the death of Pius VI, the Bishop of Imola, Chiaramonti, was elected Pope in Venice, who in memory of his great predecessor and as a warning to the enemies of the Church took the name of Pius VII. The first act of the new Pope was to take possession of his Chair in Rome, where he was triumphantly welcomed by the people.

Napoleon swallowed bitterly and invited the Pope to stipulate a Concordat, which was signed in Paris in 1801. The French rejoiced with joy, but Napoleon immediately reworked the Concordat for his own use, bringing the clergy back to the civil power.

The pope protested without result, and Napoleon, who did not seem to esteem the authority of the pope very much, esteemed him so much that he asked Pius VII to go to Paris to crown him emperor Notre Dame.

The Pope, judging it useful to the good of the Church, went there, and then Napoleon became jealous of the honors which the French people paid to the Supreme Pontiff, and which he judged to be far superior to those which they paid to him. He treated him badly, refused him any concession, let him go away, then came after him with the troops, crowned himself alone in Milan with the 1st iron crown, pronouncing the well-known words: "God has given it, woe to those who touch it", and continued the 1st march towards Rome.

He entered the Papal States and occupied Ancona. Two years later, in spite of the energetic protests of the Pope, his troops occupied Rome again and used there those kindnesses that were supposed to convince Pius VII that he was at the end of his divine mandate.

But the cup had not yet been completely emptied. In 1809, Napoleon resorted to the highest of violence: with a signature on a decree he annulled the Papal States, which he declared annexed to the French Empire, with Rome a free city (how much freedom dictators bestow!).

Within twenty-four hours, the 1st Bull of excommunication for Napoleon and his collaborators appeared on the doors of the Roman Basilicas. The Pope wept and offered his life to God for the salvation of his persecutors, but he did not have a moment's uncertainty.

What could armed Napoleon do against that meek and strong defenseless man? He did what they had done before him to Jesus and his apostles: he arrested him. The scene of Pius VI was repeated, with the same pressing invitations to abdicate (strange pertinacity in error!) and the same result: "We do not worry about our lives, Our Lord has suffered more."

Same carriage route, same serious suffering for the poor old Pontiff, but with a different ending.

Napoleon succeeded in weakening his physical resistance, to the point of obtaining a draft of a concordat, which he immediately published as a State Law, to the great detriment of the Church, because it gave the emperor the right to appoint bishops: it was almost what Napoleon had long dreamed of. The good old man, a prisoner, immediately protested against this deception, and Napoleon, now tired of struggles, victories, and defeats, let him return free to Rome, where he received a triumphant reception and from where he was able to intercede with the regent of England on behalf of his persecutor exiled to St. Helena, to find there, in the humiliation of defeat, the sense of true values.

In the struggle between Napoleon and the Church it seemed that the Church had succumbed, and at times it even seemed close to it, so much so that the rumor ran insistently that the Emperor had imprisoned, twice, "the last Pope", yet the Napoleonic splendor turned to its pale sunset, and the sun of the Church returned to shine clearer, more beneficial, brighter than ever.

## XLV THE RESTORATION

Pius VII survived the glorious Napoleon and the defeated Napoleon, but he did not survive the sufferings of the Church, which were not much relieved by that defeat.

The victors found themselves with a Europe to rebuild on the ruins of the Empire and united in Congress in Vienna in 1814-15, animated, it seemed, by excellent intentions.

On the contrary, they wanted their lofty decisions to have the official imprint of justice and peace and invited the Pope to send one of his legates to the congress. Pius VII adhered to it out of a desire for true justice and true peace, in which he firmly believed, and sent Cardinal Consalvi there.

But he had no illusions, for he knew well that Europe on the table was too much of a dish for princes starving from the long fast inflicted by Napoleon, and he knew that there was an Austrian prince at the Congress, Metternich, who had talked too much about the balance between nations not to arouse suspicion that he wanted that balance in favor of Austria. rather than justice and the freedom of peoples. There was also Talleyrand, the apostate bishop who had been Napoleon's minister and now sat down with the victors to share their spoils and made it known that he wanted the fallen monarchs back on the throne, to ask for the restoration of the ancient absolute monarchies, as if the French Revolution had been an episode to be forgotten.

The Congress was manoeuvred, in fact, by Metternich, who he succeeded in securing Austria's supremacy over the German confederation and in getting rid of Catholic Poland, dividing it between schismatic Russia and Protestant Prussia, while Talleyrand obtained the invoked restoration, with the rearrangement of peoples in favor of sovereigns, such as the union of Catholic Belgium with Protestant Holland.

The Pope's Legate also obtained something, he obtained the restitution to the Church of part of the territories. lost, except Avignon, the Polesine, Ferrara and Comacchio, divided, as predatory interests, between France and Austria.

But the Congress believed that it had done a magnanimous work, and in order to give it a new seal of high authority, three of the principal nations decided to unite in a Holy Alliance to guarantee a long peace to the peoples in freedom and to Europe, and again invited the Pope to impress on it with his participation that high seal of sanctity.

The meek and humble Pius VII did not find anything holy in it, on the contrary he felt a firm desire for concerted reactionary action against the new ferments of freedom and democracy that animated the peoples, and he said no.

Instead, with persevering patience and hope, he began to stipulate separate concordats with the different nations, according to the religious needs of each people.

The Pope, who had suffered so much without the storms being able to snatch the rudder from his white hands, died suffering at the sight of the fire that destroyed the Basilica of St. Paul.

But his heart was already pierced by the vast bloody fires that were raging throughout Christendom, from Spain to Brazil, from Piedmont to the Balkan Peninsula.

Everywhere the populations had the support of the Clergy, who were also poor together with the poor, and yet everywhere the Church paid the price, with open or veiled persecutions, with confiscations of goods, with violation of pacts.

The people listened more attentively, as attractive novelties, to the malicious voices of the Secret Societies, which regained strength in the name of the "goddess of reason", as 1st Freemasonry, and were born in the name of secular freedom and therefore false and impotent, as the 1st Carboneria. They were the seeds of the French Revolution that the wind of trade spread over the continents, finding a prosperous ground for the long oppression suffered by the populations.

In that climate Liberalism was born. It was born in defense of political freedom, of the press and of economic initiative. He was born on the left, as we would say today, and he was born badly, as happens in every left birth, because he immediately became secular and anticlerical, setting himself against the justice and peace he was seeking.

A strange fate, that of the revolutionary movements and parties, which do not want to recognize the only possible revolution, the one initiated by the Church, the revolution of love against hatred and of justice against all selfishness, of human dignity against all oppression. They do not recognize it, but rather set themselves against it, and then, having lost their true strength, they remain incapable of preventing the maturation in themselves of those seeds of dominance and injustice which they claim to fight.

They are born by fighting the Church from the left, in the name of the people and the 1st call reactionary and conservative because it stands firm in the central balance of its eternal principles; they grow, they are transformed, they become bourgeois, they make their parable to the right, and from the first they continue to fight the Church, in the name of the privileges obtained, calling it the instigator of the poor.

It has happened to Liberalism, impregnated with too many "enlightenments" to see it well; it is happening in some countries to Socialism, it is already the imprint of Communism where the true Marxist bourgeoisie rules, with its "new ruling class".

The Church remains faithful to the people, firm, tenacious, patient. Pius VII died on July 19, 1823 in the glow of the revolutions, but the Church matured new ferments of life, which then sprouted in the nations, and especially in France and Italy.

Commentato [AS3]:

## XLVI THE GAME OF IDEAS

No one would make a revolution if there were not those who prepare in their minds and not spread them in their minds: the revolution always flaunts the idea, which it did not create, but from which it was born. It was the philosophers and thinkers who armed the crowd, it was the Enlightenment that raised the French barricades and gallows, it was idealism and romanticism that reawakened, on the other hand, the patriotic sentiment of the Italians.

France had three great leaders of Catholicism to lead the Jacobin people back to the Truth. Among the thinkers he was brought back by Lacordaire, with his learned sermons at Notre Dame, to the political world by Montalembert, who defended the Church and obtained freedom of teaching, and in the school Frederick Ozanarn, who had the brilliant intuition of making the Truth in charity, transforming the bread of the mind into good wheat bread for the poor.

In Italy, German idealism, which makes man the creator of the universe at the moment he thinks of it, became Romanticism, which relies on sentiment and will.

In philosophy, the 1st Church had as its defender Abbot Rosmini, founder of concrete works, such as the Institute of Charity and the Sisters of Providence. The non-Christian philosopher limits himself to spreading the idea, but the Christian philosopher makes it himself an active action, he does not throw the idea away like a ball, shapes and clothes it with human works with his sacrifice and his faith, he himself testifies to the goodness of his doctrine.

Alessandro Manzoni took the reins of Italian Romanticism and led them to the good pastures of Catholic doctrine, while Rosmini had prepared a plan for a federation of states that would lead to the unification of Italy without the need for wars and ruins.

The Rosminians called themselves neo-Guelphs in politics because they were Catholics and proposed to this federation of states the high leadership of the Supreme Pontiff. Unfortunately, Vincenzo Gioberti took the lead in the first direction, moving the movement towards anti-Catholic liberalism.

Against them, with Guerrazzi, arose the neo-Ghibellines, who excluded, or rather opposed the Pope and the Church, as enemies of the unity of Italy.

Between the two opposite shores flowed the soft current of Giuseppe Mazzini with his Young Italy, which attracted young people for its easy and false religion of Humanity with the concept of God fused with that of People (God and People), and the exclusion of the Church. No longer the Rome of Caesar and the Rome of the Pope, but the Rome of the People, in a free and independent Republic, ruled by the People.

It was romanticism translated into thought and politics (Thought and Action), which fascinated simple souls. At the helm of the Church in such changing and treacherous waters was Pope Mastai Ferretti, Pius IX, the Pope who was most similar to Christ in the mutability of the popular soul, the most blessed and most cursed, the most acclaimed and most vilified Pope,

The borders of the Papal States were infested with brigands, smugglers, raiders, also romantics, a little executioners, a little soldiers, a little popular heroes. Pius IX was of a noble soul and one of his first acts was an amnesty that recalled the exiles from the mountains, in bands, even the political ones.

The act, unexpected at that time of easy revenge, had repercussions throughout Italy, and the name of Pius IX skyrocketed when other acts of bold reforms in favor of the freedom and prosperity of the people followed: constitution, state council, institution of a civic guard.

The wave of national enthusiasm acclaimed Pius IX as the liberator and unifier of Italy. We were in 1848, the Italians rose up against the Austrians, shouting "Long live Pius IX".

But the Pope could not become an armed leader and refused to march against Austria, declaring that as a common Father he could not lead the war of one Catholic nation against another Catholic nation.

Then the unleashed exaltators felt betrayed and unleashed resentment: they surrounded the Quirinale, shot and killed the Pope's advisor, Monsignor Palma.

Pius IX was forced to leave Rome and retire to Gaeta. Rome had the Republic dreamed of by Mazzini, with the triumvirate Mazzini, Saffi and Armellini, and with the devastation of churches and convents.

But it was a short-lived republic, and less than two years later Pius IX was able to return to Rome.

He returned victorious, but with a torn soul. His great Italian heart already saw Italy. united politically, but not united in souls. In Piedmont the real ruler was not Vittorio Emanuele II, who succeeded Carlo Alberto, it was Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, who was a great statesman, but not a mind elevated above his time, and he became a champion of the formula "Free Church in a Free State" meaning the freedom of the Church in the freedom to die suffocated: in five years he promulgated laws depriving the clergy of immunity from the civil forum, the religious orders of the property they possessed, the Church of the power over marriage, and over three hundred religious houses of the possibility of life.

Pius IX saw the Italians rise from their ancient slavery without being able to conquer freedom of conscience in respect for the Truth and the magisterium of the Church: his meek and penetrating eye was veiled with tears, his generous soul groaned, and his great shoulders bent under the weight of pain more than of age, and yet in an act of supreme hope, On December 8, 1854, he defined the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and four years later he received from Lourdes the Virgin's reply that the recognition of the uncontaminated birth had been welcome and that the Church would derive immense advantages from it.

## XLVII THE POPE OF THE RISORGIMENTO

The advantages that the Church would have derived from the dogma of the Immaculate Conception would not have been, as we shall see later, material advantages. Italian Catholics continued to suffer, in their conscience, the epic of the Risorgimento, which led to the unification of Italy without taking into account, indeed fighting the rights of the Church.

The land of the Papal States was Italian land and the greatest of Italians knew it well, but he was not called to reasonable agreements.

We like to call Pius IX the greatest of the Italians of the Risorgimento, certain that we are not doing wrong to any of the great figures of the Risorgimento. The Papal States had to yield, flap by flap, to arms, to those of Vittorio Emanuele II to the north, and to Garibaldi's armies to the south.

The Pope was left with the city of Rome, defended, certainly more for political reasons than for love of faith, by the French of Napoleon III. It was then that Pius IX was secretly asked to voluntarily renounce temporal power, but that faithful guardian of all the values and goods of the Church could not renounce what did not belong to him personally, and he rightly thought that the Church needed her own small dwelling in which she could freely and sovereignly exercise her ministry of universal salvation. Italy would not have suffered anything in its unity and independence from an agreement with the Holy See, which would instead have benefited greatly.

Giuseppe Garibaldi was the most impatient and moved from the south with his brigades to the fascinating cry of "Rome or death" but was stopped at Aspromonte by the more prudent Vittorio Emanuele, who preferred to negotiate in the meantime with France for the evacuation of the Eternal City by the French garrison.

Meanwhile, the Kingdom of Italy, proclaimed on March 14, 1861, manifested its open hostility to the Church with its first laws, under the pressure of the sects and Masonic lodges. It began with the confiscation of property and the closure of convents, continued with the exile of the bishops, the persecution and imprisonment of the most prominent men in the Catholic world, with the suppression of the Catholic press.

The French left Rome in 1866 and immediately Garibaldi, stopped at Aspromonte but only for political tactics and secretly supported by the Italian government, resumed the march on Rome. The French did not like this offensive return not foreseen in the Convention stipulated with Italy and returned to meet the Garibaldians, defeating them at Mentana in 1867 and making them desist from their attempt.

But things were going badly in their house and three years later Napoleon III was defeated at Sedan by the Germans and taken prisoner. Victor Emmanuel took advantage of this to think about the definitive conquest of Rome and wrote an obsequious letter to the Pope, asking him to allow him the honor of occupying the city in order to ensure the security of his sacred person.

The meek and firm pontiff had already tasted too much the bitterness of the protection of the old Piedmontese state and the new Italian state towards the bishops and dioceses, he had some. already had too bitter an experience for Vittorio Emanuele to be able to hope for a positive outcome of his subtle, or rather not even subtle, of his gross protest.

But the King of Italy did not even expect it and when the Pope's reply reached him with his painful words "I bless God who allowed Your Majesty to fill the last period of my life with bitterness" his troops, already ready with fifty thousand men led by General Raffaele Cadorna, had crossed the borders and marched towards Rome.

The papal garrisons, to which almost twenty thousand volunteers had been added, were ordered to withdraw: Pius IX bowed to violence, because he had a horror of the fraternal blood that would be shed and wanted to avoid it as far as possible.

He made the troops return to Rome, climbed the 1st Holy Stairs in the Lateran on his knees and retired to await the events in the Vatican, immersed in prayer, with his hands streaked with tears.

The next day, September 20th, there was the episode of the breach of Porta Pia, with the bersaglieri that the popular prints, inspired by a patriotism in the square, show unleashed. In reality it was a very small thing. The assault was preceded by five hours of cannonade of the city to which the papal garrison replied briefly and only to show that they were yielding to violence, then they raised the white flag. In all, there were less than sixty deaths in the two parts.

Instead, and as was to be expected, there was violence and damage to people, institutes and religious buildings..

On the following 15 May the Italian government promulgated the famous Law of Guarantees, which intended to settle the "Roman question", which arose with the occupation of the city by granting the Pope and the Church certain rights, but it was a unilateral and imposed law, and not a healthy fruit of negotiations or understanding, and since it did not grant the Pope the full sovereignty of his Divine mandate, the Pope could not accept it and did not accept it.

Two years later there was a suppression of religious orders throughout Italy, including, for some, even the closure and confiscation of their Generalate.

The Pope of the Risorgimento, opposed by those who confused his fidelity to the Church with earthly interests and fought him in hatred of religion, always had the people with him, and with him the whole Church, now scattered throughout the world. He was comforted by two overflowing demonstrations of fidelity and affection in 1871 on the occasion of his 25th anniversary of the papacy and in 1877 for the fiftieth anniversary of his episcopal consecration.

And yet at his death, on July 13, 1881, sectarian hatred still had the opportunity to manifest itself against his body, which the troublemakers sent by the hidden instigators wanted to throw into the Tiber, demonstrating that it frightened them even when he was dead.

History has done him justice, repairing in part the wrongs that had been done not to him but to the Church, and speaking of him with accents of admiration and gratitude, waiting for the process for his Beatification to place him on the altars for the veneration of the entire Catholic world.

## XLVIII THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE POPE

The next Ecumenical Council will be called "Vatican II" and will be directly linked to the First Vatican Council, of which the History of the Italian Risorgimento does not speak, as something extraneous to it.

And instead the hard-fought Pius IX provided for a true Risorgimento of the Church, which did not oppose the Italian one, on the contrary valued and helped it.

The Pope of the Syllabus, who condemned the widespread errors of the time, called the Vatican Council in 1869, a time of great suffering but also of great faith in the patronage of the Immaculate Conception.

A solemn act of faith of the Council was the proclamation of the infallibility of the Pope in matters of doctrine and morals.

The dogma caused a great stir. Man was raised to the infallibility of God, and less enlightened minds could not but resist it, but the dogma specifies that infallibility comes to man, raised to the dignity of Vicar of Christ, by a particular assistance of the Holy Spirit who makes infallible in matters of faith and morals not only the Pope who teaches, but also the Catholics who recognize his teaching: the Christian who obeys the commandments of the Church knows that he is not mistaken, while any doubt on the matter comes from an uncertain faith or diabolical temptations.

If anything, it is regrettable that the dogma of papal infallibility has taken so long to formulate itself. Certainly he would have spared the Church, over the centuries, not a few pains. For it too is a dogma according to reason and necessary for the secure life of a society which is perfect in itself, just as the Church, a human and divine society, must be perfect.

It is a dogma contained in the Gospel and repeated by the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church throughout the centuries, and its promulgation makes the venerable and holy figure of Pius IX even more luminous.

More than seven hundred bishops and clergymen from all over the Catholic world attended the Vatican Council, and all came to represent the rich spiritual patrimony of the Church, everywhere subject to trials and in many places still to heroism, which increased it immeasurably.

In France, the Church was tossed by political storms, and several times lost and regained the favor of the rulers, while two Archbishops of Paris, Bishop Affre and Bishop Darboy, lost the life and with them not a few priests, until the prevalence of secular and Masonic forces definitively stripped the Church of its possessions. The French clergy found themselves without economic aid and from then on embarked on that ascent towards the highest virtues that still makes them a courageous and admirable clergy, for fidelity to the Church and love of the people.

In Germany the Kulturkampf was born, a kind of obsessive mania for culture and science against the true wisdom of the Church, and we have heard of it too, unfortunately.

The Kulturkampf was born dressed as a soldier in the guise of the creator, Chancellor Bismarck, who after defeating France wanted to pulverize the Church (how many "great people continue to reveal their "littleness" in the proud design of destroying the divine in man!). German Catholics suffered greatly, but they did not lose heart, and on the other hand they founded that Catholic Center which had so much influence in German political life and ended up bending the Iron Chancellor.

The century of the "enlightenment" could not bear those that it saw shining with profound peace, conquered in sacrifice, inside the convents, and raged everywhere against the Religious Orders.

Even the most democratic Switzerland took action against the Catholic convents, ordering their closure, and forcing the Catholics to an extreme defense, which caused victims and martyrs.

Not even in Catholic Spain did the religious have a peaceful life and were sent into exile to transport the Christian seed across the borders (and today the Church has a quiet life there?).

A ray of new hope came to the Church from the American Constitution, which sanctioned freedom of worship, while throughout the new world and in the missionary world of the West, the East, and Africa, Catholicism prospered on the blood of martyrs.

Wherever civilization is spoken of, it is obligatory, for those who do not want to miserably falsify the truth, to refer to the Missionaries and the Catholic Church. How much civil progress can be called so because it has drawn on Christian thought and practice, in Asia, in Africa, in America, in Russia, then of the Tsars who were also persecutors, in Mexico rich in martyrdom, everywhere.

We have already said about the Italian situation, but there is something to add, and this something concerns Turin, the mother city of Masonic governments.

In Turin, a holy priest had prevented any form of public assistance, reaching a degree of relief from miseries that was still avant-garde and an example to the most advanced assistance: that Piedmontese priest was St. Joseph Cottolengo.

At his death, in 1842, there was already talk in Turin of another young priest, John Bosco, who once amazed even the agitated lay and secularist minister of the interior for his serenity despite having taken care of thousands of young people, whom a government intent on high politics could not see.

St. John Bosco is too well known to be said of him, and his Salesians are a blessing for too many places, in Italy and abroad, but we wanted to mention them out of a debt of gratitude to Pius IX, who having entrusted the Church to the Immaculate had demonstrated, even before proclaiming the Dogma, that even prophetic infallibility that reaches the heights of holiness.

## XLIX THE SOCIAL QUESTION

Socialism was born in England, by Owen and Thompson, founders of the Trades Unions, for the defense of the new classes of manual wage workers, following the advent of the machine, which came to transform craftsmanship into industry, creating these classes of disinherited poor, not sharing in the greater profits brought by industrialization, nor protected by the laws.

The old Christian guilds of arts and crafts, which had brought so much spirit of collaboration to the world of work in previous centuries, were replaced by the cold Trades Unions, which opposed workers to employers, even though they had a defensive union as their goal.

Communism was not born of socialism, it was born of the French Revolution (in the name it says it clearly) and precisely of the revolutionary Babeuf, whom the revolution itself later killed.

Socialism was born with a humanitarian and romantic background, but not being supported by solid moral and supernatural virtues, it soon lost its balance and came to advocate the abolition of private property and free enterprise, which are inalienable rights of human nature and irrepressible springs of progress.

Communism went further. Born revolutionary and with revolutionary wine in its doctrine, it found its organizers in Marx and Engels, with their famous Manifesto of 1848, and advocates the dictatorship of the class, of the working class, with the annihilation of the other classes and with a master state, articulated like a gigantic and inhuman machine, capable of crushing every personal manifestation of will and freedom.

It denies as enemies of the communist state the manifestations of the spirit, religion, morality, sentiment, political freedom. It denies the individual man, who does not count, but counts the mass, as the matter of action of the state machine: individuals can suffer and die by thousands and millions, provided that the mass lives, that is, the state, greedy devourer of all human energy.

Man is the slave of the state: he must live where the state wants, as the state wants, as the state wants. Even his right to form a family becomes a duty of the state, and the family belongs to the state. In communist Russia, because of the contacts he has with the West, he is now thinking, after more than forty years of communism, of the opportunity to give even a minimum dwelling to a single family, while communist China is still in the process of barricading and separating spouses. Children are of the state from birth.

Socialism that has become Marxist and communism that has remained Marxist, denying the spirit, can only see in history material events, dictated by economic necessity, while the history of the Church is a shining documentation of divine intervention in human affairs.

On the death of Pius IX, Leo XIII ascended to the papal throne and embraced the needs of the times with a penetrating gaze, and we regret that we cannot follow this gaze on the whole Catholic Church, on distant populations as well as on European peoples, on scholars and rulers, on the political life of nations and on the family, on relations between the State and the Church. on the true concept of freedom.

We must limit ourselves to following him where he stopped longest and with a poignant and wise love, about the sad conditions of the workers, exploited by capital and deceived by the agitators.

We will pause for a moment on the historic encyclical Rerum Novarum, which is dated May 15, 1891, and remains the document that resolves the serious Social Question brought to the level of public life by the advent of the machine and wage earners.

The Encyclical denounces the grave situation of the working class, at the mercy of employers, without protective laws, as an instrument of production and without respect for the dignity of the human person.

There is a condemnation of liberal principles, which give much in the hands of the few owners of capital, for want of Christian laws and Christian organization of labor.

He then points out in socialism the same errors as capitalism, comparing the class struggle to monopoly. He defends private property as the right of the worker to possess not only his instruments of labour, but what he needs for a human life worthy of the name and for the incentive to his own improvement of conditions. Without the stimulus to improve, there is no valid support for the family, which suffers the saddest consequences.

Finally, *1a Rerum Novarum* indicates the Christian social principles for a happy solution of the problems of work in an alternating spirit of justice, faith and love, with a superior providence that directs the destiny of men to a higher end of total, material and spiritual good.

In the light of this Encyclical, Christian social movements arose in the various Catholic nations, which in little more than half a century have redeemed the conditions of the humble much deeper and much higher than the socialist parties, which have drawn from Christianity what they have best, unfortunately distorting it. In Italy we remember the 1st Christian Democracy, born in those years with Giuseppe Toniolo, then reborn with Don Luigi Sturzo and Alcide De Gasperi.

Leo XIII died at the age of 93 on July 20, 1903 and even the opponents of the Church bowed to his memory, as to one of the greatest popes, who lived in one of the most difficult times.

## L POPE SARTO, HOLY POPE

There is no Pope who has governed the Church in the time of Hosanna, they have all governed it in the time of the Crucifixion, a time that will last until the last Pope, because on this earth we are pilgrims, subject to the moods of peoples and nations.

On August 4, 1903, when Pope Giuseppe Sarto was elected and took the name of Pius X, peoples and nations were still shaken by social convulsions and the doctrines that determined them, in contrast to the maternal ones of the Church.

Leo XIII had been the Pope of the introduction of divine wisdom into the social question, not as a calming but as a solution, but the sick people continued to trust the doctors of violent politics and to cause pain to Mother Church.

Pius X knew this people well because he lived among them from birth to the patriarchy of Venice and loved them with a most tender love.

He did not take him with the doctrine, he went to meet him with his heart. More than good politicians and before these, he thought that the people. he needed holy priests, because it is useless to have illusions, the world is saved by the Catholic priest or no one saves him: the municipality will be well administered if the parishes that compose it are holy, the State will have good government if the holiness of the priest has been able to permeate the masses.

Pius X turned his attention to the clergy with a truly paternal spirit, desiring them first to be "good", that is, just and holy, then learned, first faithful to the liturgy and prayer, then an organizer.

His first Encyclical, "Restoring All Things in Christ" immediately gives him a great moral figure and establishes his direction.

While the French parliament on December 3, 1905, after that government had broken relations with the Holy See, gave him the burning pain of the law that again separated the Church from the State and again deprived the French Church of all its goods and any contribution, Pius X was thinking of future good laws while restoring Christian society in the hearts of children with the 1st concession of the Most Holy Sacrament. Eucharist to children who have the use of reason, even if at an early age.

He condemned this iniquitous law of the French Parliament, clutching to his heart that clergy called once again to a heroic life, and the Church of France, freed from the old ties with political power, had that luxuriance that still lasts.

Italy was still a young kingdom, but a young man spoiled by a bad education, he was a Masonic and liberal young man; as a Masonic they studied to harass the Church, for example by prohibiting religious instruction in schools and removing the crucifix from public places as making life difficult for religious congregations; and as a liberal he cultivated the misery of the disinherited classes, especially in the South, and in poverty he allowed the revolutionary germs to flourish, which broke out in strikes and disorders.

Pius X suffered greatly for the conditions of the Italians and while remaining firm to the conditions imposed by the unresolved Roman Question, he wanted to meet the Italian people as much as he could and with the "Gentiloni Pact", concluded between the Catholic Electoral Union and the Giolitti Government, he allowed Catholics to participate in the life of the nation by favoring the candidacies of men who undertook to respect the indissolubility of marriage, a freedom of education, reforms in favor of the poor classes.

Our elders remember with nostalgia the Opera dei Congressi, which for more than a century brought together lay Catholics on the religious and social levels to combat atheistic secularism.

It was Pius X who dissolved it, but in order to discipline and multiply it: in fact, he divided it into three independent branches, the Popular Union, the Economic-Social Union and the Electoral Union, each having its own characteristics and its own particular tasks, according to the increased needs •

The Pope who wanted to "restore all things in Christ" found himself having to face and condemn the Modernism that had also taken hold of Catholic circles, in Europe and America, and that wanted to restore everything in man, without real help from Christ. It was the idealistic doctrine applied to religion, which became a manifestation of the subconscious of Man, without the need for divine revelation.

Pius X condemned and eradicated it with the Encyclical Pascendi of 1907, and thought of reinvigorating the true faith in the peoples by referring to the sources with the reorganization and diffusion of the catechism by means of numerous catechetical congresses and by compiling himself that Catechism of Christian Doctrine which is still used today in our parishes.

He provided for the Reform of the Breviary, the Reform of Canon Law, the Reform of the Conclave, the Reorganization of the Curia, the Renewal of the Liturgy and Sacred Music.

He is the Pope of daily Communion permitted and recommended to the laity, and as much as residues of Jansenism want to make one suspect those who receive Communion frequently as people who take things lightly, in reality the Church can trust and count on these faithful who on many difficult occasions have shown themselves and continue to be the most ready and generous.

Pius X died of a broken heart at the outbreak of the First World War, which he had tried in vain to avoid. A great man died and a saint was born, to enrich the Church and all humanity.

## LI LASTORIA CONTINUA

They are at the last chapter of our rapid history of twenty centuries, and it would still remain to be said of almost fifty years of the intense life of the Church, with four great popes, Benedict XV, Pius XI, Pius XII, and the reigning pontiff John XXIII.

Benedict XV found the world at war in 1914 and left it in 1922 in peace: he is the Pope of Peace. He desired her 1a he wanted, 1a he suffered with all his strength.

He is the creator of a League of Nations, the creator of the Vatican Office for prisoners, the missing, the condemned and the oppressed, the intercessor with all governments first to prevent its enlargement, then to put an end to the useless slaughter of the First World War.

His policy of peace almost doubled the number of states that had 1st diplomatic representation to the Holy See.

He allowed the foundation of the Italian People's Party for the participation of Catholics in political life, promulgated the code of Canon Law, improved relations with France with the canonization of Joan of Arc. He favored the foundation of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart and the Missionary Union of the Clergy.

Pius XI is the strong Pope who found himself struggling with the racist madness of German Nazism and with the wave of grandeur of Italian fascism, unhappily allied. Russian Bolshevism swept away the ecclesiastical hierarchy from its immense territory, inflicting violence even on the simple faithful.

The Spanish Revolution was stained by the terrible massacres of priests and religious.

Pius XI condemned German racism and energetically confronted the excesses of Italian fascism, condemned atheistic and ruthless communism, and invited the faithful to courage against persecution, at the same time admonishing the rulers of peoples with the institution of the feast of Christ the King.

He is the Pope of the great sanctifications, St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, St. John Bosco, St. Joseph Cottolengo; the Pope of Catholic Action, whom he strenuously defended against fascist devastation, calling it "the apple of his eye" by admonishing: "whoever touches Catholic Action touches the Pope and whoever touches the Pope dies". He is also the Pope of the Missions, for the impulse given to the formation of the indigenous clergy and the consecration in St. Peter's of the first Chinese, Japanese and Indian Bishops.

We Italians must be particularly grateful to him for the conclusion of the Lateran Pacts and the Concordat with the Italian state, which put an end to the uneasiness of the Roman Question and restored "God to Italy and Italy to God".

It is the Pope who resolutely faces the Social Question in difficult times with 1st Quadragesimo anno, an Encyclical worthy of standing alongside Rerum Novarum, of which it is the development and completion.

He died on 10 February 1939 when he had already summoned the Italian Bishops in view of the terrible events that were maturing.

And who instead had to face his successor Cardinal Pacelli, Pius XII, the beloved Pope whom we all remember with so much gratitude and veneration.

The Defensor Urbis from the ruins of the war, launched the cry of anguish: "With peace everything is saved, with war everything is destroyed". He was not listened to, and we have experienced the consequences in order to be able to remember them again, and the younger ones have at least heard them narrated, if they do not themselves bear the burden in the loss of their loved ones and their possessions: an immense massacre of many millions of men and an immense ruin of cities and nations, without any good having come out of it.

The Pope's charity was inexhaustible: Vatican City was transformed into the City of the Father of all the suffering and of all the living. All the peoples of the earth and all those suffering from every

idea and color, from every distance and situation, have knocked and found refreshment. The great magazines that go in search of sensational reports would have splendid material here!

The Pope, of a universal culture and rare wisdom, touched with singular competence and sensitivity on all the problems of the modern world. He is the Pope of Mary, with the Marian Year and the Dogma of the Assumption; the Pope of the Holy Year, of the great Audiences in St. Peter's Square (who does not remember without emotion his incorporeal figure in the act of Blessing?) of the numerous canonizations, including St. Maria Goretti.

He led Italian Catholics in the difficult rebirth of democracy and in their generous work of saving freedom

Upon his death, mourned by Catholics all over the world, on October 9, 1958, Cardinal Roncalli was elected Pope who took the name of John XXIII.

And let's stop here. It is not appropriate to write about this living Pope of ours, who can be said to have a life for every Catholic, since each of us carries him in his heart, but rather it is appropriate to turn with all our soul to the next Ecumenical Council, his Ecumenical Council, which arouses so many hopes even in divided brothers and peoples of other religions. Let us take stock of our history with our hearts turned to the new chapter, certainly splendid, proposing to make ourselves worthy to live it with the humble contribution of our prayers and our works that will have to link a bright past to a future fruitful of good for all the nations of the earth.

Athos Carrara