

THE ONE TRUE CHURCH.

THE ONLY CHURCH THAT CHRIST ESTABLISHED IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

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A Lecture given by Fr. Damen in the United States in 1888

“He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned”—Mark (16,16)

I. MY DEARLY BELOVED CHRISTIANS :—From these words of our Divine Saviour, it has already been proved to you, that faith is necessary for salvation, and without faith there is no salvation; without faith there is eternal damnation. Read your own Protestant Bible, 16th verse of St. Mark, and you will find it stronger there than in the Catholic Bible.

Now, then, what kind of faith must a man have to be saved? Will any faith do? Why, if any faith will do, the devil himself will be saved, for the Bible says the devils believe and tremble.

It is, therefore, not a matter of indifference what religion a man professes; he must profess the right and true religion, and without that there is no hope of salvation, for it stands to reason, my dear people, that if God reveals a thing or teaches a thing, He wants to be believed. Not to believe is to insult God. Doubting His word, or to believe even with doubt and hesitating, is an insult to God, because it is doubting His Sacred Word. We must, therefore, believe without doubting, without hesitating.

I have said, out of the Catholic Church there is no divine faith—can be no divine faith out of that Church. Some of the Protestant friends will be shocked at this, to hear me say that out of the Catholic Church there is no divine faith, and that without faith there is no salvation, but damnation. I will prove all I have said.

I have said that out of the Catholic Church there can be no divine faith. What is divine faith? When we believe a thing upon the authority of God, and believe it without doubt, without hesitating. Now, all our separated brethren outside of the Catholic Church take the private interpretation of the Bible for their guide; but the private interpretation of the Bible can never give them divine faith.

Let me, for instance, suppose for a moment, here is a Presbyterian; he reads his Bible; from the reading of his Bible he comes to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is God. Now, you know this is the most essential of all Christian doctrines—the foundation of all Christianity. From the reading of his Bible he comes to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is God; and he is a sensible man, an intelligent man, and not a presumptuous man. And he says: “Here is my Unitarian neighbour, who is just as reasonable and intelligent as I am, as honest, as learned, and as prayerful as I am, and, from the reading of the Bible, he comes to the conclusion that Christ is not God at all. ‘Now,’ say’ he, “to the best of my opinion and judgment, I am right, and my Unitarian neighbor is wrong; but, after all,” says he,.” I may be mistaken! Perhaps I have not the right meaning of the text, and if I am wrong perhaps he is right, after all; but, to the best of my opinion and judgment, I am right and he is wrong.”

On what does he believe? On what authority? On his own opinion and judgment And what is that? A human opinion—human testimony, and, therefore, a human faith. He cannot say positively, “I am sure, positively sure, as sure as there is a God in heaven, that this is the meaning of the text.” Therefore, he has no other authority but his own opinion and judgment, and what his preacher tells him. But the preacher is a smart man. There are many smart Unitarian preachers also, but that proves nothing; it is only human authority, and nothing else, and, therefore, only human faith. What is human faith? Believing a thing upon the testimony of man. Divine faith is believing a thing on the testimony of God.

II The Catholic has divine faith, and why? Because the Catholic says: “I believe in such and such a thing.” Why? “Because the Church teaches me so.” And why do you believe the Church? “Because God has commanded me to believe

the teaching of the Church; and God has threatened me with damnation if I do not believe the Church, and we are taught by St. Peter, in his epistle that there is no private prophecy or interpretation of the Scriptures, for the unlearned and unstable wrest the very Scriptures, the Bible, to their own damnation.”

That is strong language, my dear people, but that is the language of St. Peter, the head of the Apostles. The unlearned and unstable wrest the Bible to their own damnation! And yet, after all, the Bible is the book of God, the language of inspiration; at least, when we have a true Bible, as we Catholics have, and you Protestants have not.’

But, my dearly beloved Protestant friends, do not be offended at me for saying that. Your own most learned preachers and bishops tell you that, and some have written whole volumes in order to prove that the English translation, which you have, is a very faulty and false translation.

Now, therefore, I say that the true Bible is as the Catholics have it, the Latin Vulgate; and the most learned among the Protestants themselves have agreed that the Latin Vulgate Bible, which the Catholic Church always makes use of, is the best in existence; and, therefore, it is, as you may have perceived, that when I preach I give the text in Latin, because the Latin text of the Vulgate is the best extant.

III. Now, they may say that Catholics acknowledge the Word of God; that it is the language of inspiration; and that, therefore, we are sure that we have the Word of God; but, my dear people, the very best thing may be abused, the very best thing; and, therefore, our Divine Saviour has given us a living teacher, that is to give us the true meaning of the Bible.

And He has provided a teacher with infallibility; and this was absolutely necessary, for without this.. without infallibility we could never be sure of our faith. There must be an infallibility; and we see that in every well-ordered government, in every government—in England, in the United States, and in every country, empire and republic, there is a Constitution and a supreme law.

But you are not at liberty to explain that Constitution and supreme law as you think proper, for then there would be no more law if every man were allowed to explain the law and Constitution as he should think proper.

Therefore, in all governments there is a supreme judge and supreme court, and to the supreme judge is referred all different understandings of the law and the Constitution. By the decisions of the supreme judge all have to abide, and if they did not abide by that decision why, my dear people, there would be no law any more, but anarchy, disorder and confusion.

Again, suppose for a moment that the Blessed Saviour has been less wise than human governments, and that He had not provided for the understanding of His Constitution, and of His Law of the Church of God. If He had not, my dear people, it would never have stood as it has stood for the last eighteen hundred and fifty-four years. He has then established a Supreme Court, a Supreme Judge in the Church of the Living God.

IV. It is admitted on all sides, by Protestants and Catholics alike acknowledged, that Christ has established a Church; and, strange to say, all our Protestant friends acknowledge, too, that he has established but one Church—but one Church—for, whenever Christ speaks of His Church, it is always in the singular. Bible readers, remember that; my Protestant friends, pay attention. He says: “Hear the Church,”—not hear the churches—” I have built My Church upon a rock “—not My churches.

Whenever He speaks, whether in figures or parables of His Church, He always conveys to the mind a oneness, a union, a unity. He speaks of His Church as a sheepfold, in which there is but one shepherd—that is the head of all, and the sheep are made to follow his voice; “other sheep I have who are not of this fold.” One fold, you see. He speaks of His Church as of a kingdom, in which there is but one king to rule all; speaks of His Church as a family in which there is but one father at the head; speaks of his Church as a tree, and all the branches of that tree are connected with the trunk, and the trunk with the roots; and Christ is the root, and the trunk is Peter and the Popes, and the large branches are the bishops, and the smaller branches the priests, and the fruit upon that tree are the faithful throughout the world; and the branch, says He, that is cut off from that tree shall wither away, produce no fruit, and is only fit to be cast into the fire—that is, damnation.

This is plain speaking, my dear people; but there is no use in covering the truth. I want to speak the truth to you, as the Apostles preached it in their time—no salvation out of the Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

V. Now, which is that Church? There are now three hundred and fifty different Protestant churches in existence, and almost every year one or two more are added; and besides this number there is the Catholic Church.

Now, which of all these varied churches is the one Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? All claim, to be the Church of Jesus.

But, my dear beloved people, it is evident no church can be the Church of Jesus except the one that was established by Jesus. And when did Jesus establish His Church? When? When He was here upon earth. And how long ago is it that Christ was upon earth? You know our Christian era dates from Him. He was born many centuries ago. That is an historical fact admitted by all. He lived on earth thirty-three years. That was about nineteen centuries before our time. That is the time Christ established His Church on earth. Any Church, then, that has not existed this long, is not the Church of Jesus Christ, but is the institution or invention of some man or other; not of God, not of Christ, but of man.

Now, where is the Church, and which is the Church that has existed thus long? All history informs you that is the Catholic Church; she, and she only among all Christian denominations on the race of the earth, has existed so long. All history, I say, bears testimony to this; not only Catholic history, but Pagan history, Jewish history and Protestant history, indirectly.

The history, then, of all nations, of all people, bear testimony that the Catholic Church is the oldest, the first; is the one established by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

If there be any Protestant preacher who can prove that the Catholic Church has come into existence since that time, let him come to see me and I will give him a thousand dollars. My dear preachers, here is a chance of making money—a thousand dollars for you.

Not only all history, but all the monuments of antiquity bear testimony to this, and all the nations of the earth proclaim it. Call on one of your preachers and ask him which was the first church—the first Christian Church. Was it the Presbyterian, the Episcopalian, the Church of England the Methodist, the Universalist or the Unitarian? And they will answer you it was the Catholic Church.

But, my dear friend, if you admit that the Catholic Church is the first and oldest—the Church established by Christ—why are you not a Catholic? To this they answer that the Catholic Church has become corrupted; has fallen into error, and therefore, it was necessary to establish a new church. A new church, a new religion.

And to this we answer: that if the Catholic Church had been once the true church, then she is true yet, and shall be the true Church of God to the end of time, or Jesus Christ has deceived us.

Hear me, Jesus, hear what I say! I say that the Catholic Church now, in the nineteenth century is not the true Church of God as she was 1854 years ago, then I say, Jesus, Thou hast deceived us, Thou art an imposter ! And if I do not speak truth, Jesus, strike me dead in this pulpit—let me fall dead in this pulpit, for I do not want to be a preacher of a false religion!

VI. I will prove what I have said. If the Catholic Church has been once the true Church of God as is admitted by all, then she is the true Church yet, and shall be the true Church of God until the end of time, for Christ has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church. He says that He has built it upon a rock, and that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.

Now, my dear people, if the Catholic Church has fallen into error, then the gates of hell have prevailed against her; and, if the gates of hell have prevailed against her, then Christ has not kept His promise, then He has deceived us, and if He has deceived us, then He is an imposter! If He be an imposter, then He is not God, and if He be not God, then all Christianity is a cheat and an imposition.

Again, in St. Matthew, 28th chapter and verses XIX. and XX., our Divine Saviour says to His Apostles: “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you.” “Lo,” says He, “I, Jesus, the Son of the Living God, I, the Infinite Wisdom, the Eternal Truth, am with you all days, even until the end of the world.”

Christ, then, solemnly swears that He shall be with His Church all days to the end of time, to the consummation of the

world. But Christ cannot remain with the Church that teaches error, or falsehood, or corruption. If, therefore, the Catholic Church has fallen into error and corruption, as our Protestant friends say she has, then Christ must have abandoned her; if so, He has broken His oath; if He has broken His oath He is a perjurer, and there is no Christianity at all. Again, our Divine Saviour (St. John, 24th chapter) has promised that He would send to His Church the Spirit of Truth, to abide with her forever. If, then, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, teaches the Church all truth, and teaches her all truth forever, then there never has been, and never can be, one single error in the Church of God, for where there is all truth there is no error whatsoever.

Christ has solemnly promised that He will send to the Church the Spirit of Truth, who shall teach all truth forever; therefore, there has never been a single error in the Church of God, or Christ has failed in His promises if there has.

Again, Christ commands us to hear and believe the teachings of the Church in all things; at all times and in all places. He does not say hear the Church for a thousand years or for fifteen hundred years, but hear the Church, without any limitation, without any reservation, or any restriction of time whatever. That is, at all times ; in all things until the end of time, and he that does not hear the Church let him be unto thee, says Christ, as a heathen and as a publican. Therefore, Christ says that those who refuse to hear the Church must be looked upon as heathens; and what is a heathen? One that does not worship the true God; and a publican is a public sinner. This is strong language. Could Christ command me to believe the Church if the Church could have led me astray--- could lead me into error? If the teaching of the Church be corrupt, could He, the God of truth, command me without any restriction or limitation to hear and believe the teachings of the Church which He has established?

Again: Our Divine Saviour commands me to hear and believe the teaching of the Church in the same manner as if He Himself were to speak to us. "He that heareth you," says He, in His charge to the Apostles, "heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me." So then, when I believe what the Church teaches I believe what God teaches. If I refuse what the Church teaches I refuse what God teaches.

So that Christ has made the Church the organ by which He speaks to man, and tells us positively that we must believe the teaching of the Church as if He Himself were to speak to us.

Therefore, says St. Paul, in his Epistle to Timothy, "the Church is the ground"—that is, the strong foundation—"and the pillar of the truth." Take the ground or foundation of this edifice away, and it crumbles down; so with regard to these pillars upon which the roof rests; take them away and the roof will fall in; so St. Paul says, "the Church is the ground and the pillar of truth," and the moment you take away the authority of the Church of God you induce all kinds of errors and blasphemous doctrines. Do we not see it?

VII. In the sixteenth century Protestantism did away with the authority of the Church and constituted every man his own judge of the Bible and what was the consequence? Religion upon religion, church upon church, sprang into existence, and has never stopped springing up new churches to this day. When I gave my Mission in Flint, Michigan, I invited, as I have done here, my Protestant friends to come and see me. A good and intelligent man came to see me and said:

"I will avail myself of this opportunity to converse with you."

"What Church do you belong to, my friend?" said I.

"To the Church of the Twelve Apostles," says he.

"Ha! Ha!" said I, "I belong to that Church too. But, tell me, my friend, where was your Church started?"

"In Terre Haute, Indiana," says he.

"Who started the Church, and who were the Twelve Apostles, my friend?" said I.

"They were twelve farmers," says he; "we all belonged to the same Church—the Presbyterian— but we quarreled with our preacher, separated from him, and started a Church of our own."

"And that," says I, "is the Twelve Apostles you belonged to—twelve farmers of Indiana! The Church came into existence about thirty years ago."

A few years ago, when I was in Terre Haute, I asked to be shown the Church of the Twelve Apostles. I was taken to a window and it was pointed out to me, "but it is not in existence anymore," said my informant, "it is used as a wagon-

maker's shop now."

Again, St. Paul, in his Epistles to the Galatians, says: "Though we Apostles, or even an angel from heaven were to come and preach to you a different Gospel from what we have preached, let him be anathema." That is the language of St. Paul, because, my dearly beloved people, religion must come from God, not from man; No man has a right to establish a religion; no man has a right to dictate to his fellow-man what he shall believe and what he shall do to save his soul. Religion must come from God, and any religion that is not established by God is a false religion, a human institution, and not an institution of God; and therefore did St. Paul say in his Epistles to the Galatians, "Though we Apostles or even an angel from heaven were to come and preach to you a new Gospel, a new religion, let them be anathema"

VIII. You see, then, my dearly beloved people, from the text of the Scripture I have quoted that, if the Catholic Church has been once the true Church then she is yet the true Church.

You have also seen from what I have said that the Catholic Church is the institution of God, and not of man, and this is a fact—a fact of history, and no fact of history so well supported, so well proved, as that the Catholic Church is the first, the Church established by Jesus Christ

So, in like manner, it is an historical fact that all the Protestant churches are the institutions of man—every one of them. And I will give you their date, and the name of their founders or institutors.

In the year 1520—368 years ago—the first Protestant came into the world. Before that one there was not a Protestant in the world, not one on the face of the whole earth; and that one, as all history tells us, was Martin Luther, who was a Catholic priest, who fell away from the Church through pride, and married a nun. He was excommunicated from the Church, cut off, banished and made a new religion of his own.

Before Martin Luther there was not a Protestant in the world; he was the first to raise the standard of rebellion and revolt against the Church of God. He said to his disciples that they should take the Bible for their guide, and they did so. But they soon quarreled with him, Zuinglius, and a number of others, and everyone of them started a new religion of his own.

After the disciples of Martin Luther came John Calvin, who in Geneva established the Presbyterian religion, and, hence, almost all of those religions go by the name of their founder.

I ask the Protestant, "Why are you a Lutheran my friend?"

"Well," says he, "because I believe in the doctrine of good Martin Luther."

Hence, not of Christ, but of man—Martin Luther.

And what kind of a man was he? A man who had broken the solemn oath he had made at the altar of God, at his ordination, ever to lead a pure, single and virginal life. He broke that solemn oath, and married a Sister Catharine, who had also taken the same oath of chastity and virtue. And this is the first founder of Protestantism in the world. The very name by which they are known tells you they came from Martin Luther.

So the Presbyterians are sometimes called Calvinists because they come from, or profess to believe in, John Calvin.

IX. After them came Henry VIII. He was a Catholic, and defended the Catholic religion; he wrote a book against Martin Luther in defense of the Catholic doctrine. That book I have myself seen in the library of the Vatican at Rome a few years ago. Henry VIII. defended the religion and for doing so was titled by the Pope "Defender of the Faith." It came down with his successors, and Queen Victoria inherits it today. He was married to Catharine of Arragon; but there was at his court a maid of honor to the Queen, named Ann Boleyn, who was a beautiful woman, and captivating in appearance. Henry was determined to have her. But he was a married man. He put in a petition to the Pope to be allowed to marry her—and a foolish petition it was, for the Pope had no power to grant the prayer of it. The Pope and all the bishops in the world cannot go against the will of God. Christ says: "If a man putteth away his wife and marrieth another, he committeth adultery, and he that marrieth her who is put away committeth adultery also."

As the Pope would not grant the prayer of Henry's petition he took Ann Boleyn anyhow, and was excommunicated from the Church.

After a while there was another maid of honor, prettier than the first, more beautiful and charming in the eyes of

Henry, and he said he must have her, too. He took the third wife, and a fourth, fifth and sixth followed. Now this is the founder of the Anglican Church, the Church of England; and, therefore, it is that it goes by the name of the Church of England.

Our Episcopalian friends are making great efforts nowadays to call themselves Catholic, but they shall never come to it. They own that the name Catholic is a glorious one, and they would like to possess it. The Apostles said : “I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church”—they never said, in the Anglican Church. The Anglicans deny their religion, for they say they believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church.

Ask them are they Catholics, and they say yes but not Roman Catholics; we are English Catholics.” What is the meaning of the word Catholic? It comes from the Greek word *Catholicus* —universal—spread all over the earth, and everywhere the same. Now, first of all, the Anglican is not spread all over the earth; it only exists in a few countries, and chiefly only where the English language is spoken. Secondly, they are not the same all over the earth, for there are now four different Anglican churches: The Low Church, the High Church, the Ritualist Church and the Puseyite Church. *Catholicus* means more than this, not only spread all over the earth and everywhere the same, but it means, moreover, at all times the same, from Christ up to the present day. Now, then, they have not been in existence from the time of Christ. There never was an Episcopalian or an Anglican Church before Henry VIII: The Catholic Church had already existed fifteen hundred years before the Episcopal came into the world.

After Episcopalianism different other churches sprang up. Next came the Methodist, about one hundred and fifty years ago. It was started by John Wesley, who was at first a member of the Episcopalian Church; subsequently he joined the Moravian Brethren, but not liking them, he made a religion of his own—the Methodist Church.

After John Wesley several others sprang up; and finally came the Campbellites, about sixty years ago. This Church was established by Alexander Campbell, a Scotchman.

X. Well, now, my dear beloved people, you may think that the act of the twelve apostles of Indiana was a ridiculous one, but they had as much right to establish a church as had Henry VIII., or Luther, or John Calvin. They had no right and neither had Henry VIII., or the rest any right whatsoever.

Christ had established His Church and given His solemn oath that His Church should stand to the end of time; promised that He had built it upon rock, and that the gates of hell should never prevail against it—hence, my dear people, all those different denominations of religion are the invention of man; and I ask you can man save the soul of his fellow-man by any institution he can make? Must not religion come from God?

And, therefore, my dearly beloved separated brethren, think over it seriously. You have a soul to be saved, and that soul must be saved or damned; either one or the other, it will dwell with God in heaven or with the devil in hell; therefore, seriously meditate upon it.

When I gave my Mission in Brooklyn several Protestants became Catholics. Among them there was a very highly educated and intelligent Virginian. He was a Presbyterian. After he had listened to my lecture he went to see his minister, and he asked him to be kind enough to explain a text of the Bible. The minister gave him the meaning. “Well, now,” said the gentleman, “are you positive and sure that is the meaning of the text, for several other Protestants explain it differently?” “Why, my dear young man,” says the preacher, “we never can be certain of our faith.” “Well, then,” says the young man, “good-bye to you: If I cannot be sure of my faith in the Protestant Church, I will go where I can,” and he became a Catholic.

We are sure of our faith in the Catholic Church, and if our faith is not true, Christ has deceived us. I would, therefore, beg you, my separated brethren, to procure yourselves Catholic books. You have read a great deal against the Catholic Church, now read something in favor of it. You can never pass an impartial sentence if you do not hear both sides of the question.

What would you think of a judge before whom a policeman would bring a poor offender, and who on the charge of the policeman, without hearing the prisoner, would order him to be hung? “Give me a hearing,” says the poor man, “and I will prove my innocence. I am not guilty,” says he. The policeman says he is guilty. “Well, hang him anyhow,” says the

judge. What would you say of that judge? Criminal judge! unfair man; you are guilty of the blood of the innocent! Would not you say that? Of course you would.

Well now, my dearly beloved Protestant friends, that is what you have been doing all along; you have been hearing one side of the question and condemning us Catholics as a superstitious lot of people, poor ignorant people, idolatrous people, nonsensical people, going and telling their sins to the priest; and what, after all, is the priest more any other man? My dear friends, have you examined the other side of the question?

No, you do not think it worth your while; this is the way the Jews dealt with our Lord Saviour Jesus Christ; and this is the way Pagans and Jews dealt with the Apostles, the ministers of the Church, and with the primitive Christians.

Allow me to tell you, my friends, that you have been treating us precisely in the same way the Jews and Pagans treated Jesus Christ and His Apostles. I have said this evening hard things, but if St. Paul were here tonight, in this pulpit, he would have said harder things still. I have said them however, not through a spirit of unkindness, through a spirit of love, and a spirit of charity, in the hope of opening your eyes that your souls may be saved. It is love for your salvation, my dearly beloved Protestant brethren—for which I would gladly give my heart's blood—my love for your salvation that has made me preach to you as I have done.

XI. "Well," say my Protestant friends," if a man thinks he is right would not he be right?" Let us suppose now a man in Ottawa, who wants to go to Chicago, but takes a car for New York; the conductor asks for his ticket; and he at once says "You are in the wrong car; your ticket is for Chicago, but you are going to New York." "Well, what of that?" says the passenger. "I mean well". "Your meaning will not go well with you in the end," says the conductor, "for you will come at New York instead of Chicago."

You say you mean well, my dear friends; meaning will not take you to heaven; you must do well also. "He that doeth the will of My Father," says Jesus, "he alone shall be saved." There are millions in hell who meant well.

You must do well, and be sure you are doing well to be saved. I thank my separated brethren for their kindness in coming to these controversial lectures. I hope I have said nothing to offend them. Of course, it would be nonsense for me not to preach Catholic doctrines.
