

things, and at Rogation-tide she blesses the earth and the crops, sown in order that in due season they may bring forth in abundance. "That thou wouldst vouchsafe to give and preserve the fruits of the earth, we beseech thee, hear us"—we pray at that time. It is a tragedy of this scientific age that we should have to try to *cultivate* the vision, now almost lost to us, of the psalmist; to him it was something that sprang from his heart. As Dame Julian of Norwich says: 'But for failing in love on our part, therefore is all our travail.'



## EULOGY ON SAINTS PETER AND PAUL<sup>1</sup>

ST LEO THE GREAT, POPE

**D**EARLY beloved, the whole world is a partaker of all sacred solemnities, and love of the one faith demands that if honour is given any event, touching the salvation of all men, it would be celebrated everywhere with common rejoicing. Truly should today's festival be honoured, in addition to the reverence which it has merited from all the world, with a special and unique exultation in our City so that in the place where the death of the chief Apostles was made glorious there on the day of their martyrdom may exist a pre-eminence of joy. For these are the men through whom the good tidings of Christ brought a new light to you, O Rome, and you, Mistress of Error in the past, became the Disciple of Truth. These are your holy fathers and true shepherds who founded you so as to place you in heavenly kingdoms, establishing you much better and much more successfully than they by whose zeal the first foundations of your walls were laid. In fact, the one who gave you his name defiled you with his brother's blood. These are the ones who lifted you to such glory that as a holy nation, a chosen race, a

<sup>1</sup> *Migne Patrologia Latina* 54: 422-428. Translated by Sister M. Melchior, O.P., River Forest.

priestly and royal state (1 Peter 2, 9) you have become head of the world, and through blessed Peter's holy see you rule more extensively by the worship of God than by dominion over the world. Granted that you have enlarged your sway through many victories and have extended the authority of your empire on land and sea, yet that which the toil of war has brought into submission to you is less than what the peace of Christ has gained.

For the good and just and all-powerful God, who has never denied his mercy to the human race and has always instructed all men alike in the knowledge of himself by his ever boundless benefits, has by a more secret design and deeper love taken pity on sinful man's blindness of will and his inclination to wickedness, by sending his co-eternal Word. He, the Incarnate One, united the divine nature to the human in such a way that his lowering of himself to the depths became our ascent to the heights. However, that the effect of his unspeakable grace might be diffused throughout the world, divine Providence prepared the Roman kingdom whose growth has advanced to those limits whereby the world of all nations everywhere is closely linked together. For it was exceedingly proper to the carrying out of the divinely planned work that many kingdoms should be federated under one empire so that the universal preaching might speedily reach the nations bound by the rule of one state. Yet that state, ignorant of the Author of its advancement, though it dominated almost all nations, was subject to the errors of all these peoples and appeared to itself to have embraced a great religion in that it rejected no falsehood. Inasmuch as it was so firmly bound by the devil, so much more wonderfully has it been set free by Christ.

When the twelve Apostles had received the gift of tongues from the Holy Spirit (Acts 2, 4) and, having apportioned the parts of the earth among themselves, undertook to imbue the world with the Gospel, the most blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, was destined for the citadel of the Roman Empire in order that from that very head the light of truth which was revealed for the salvation of all nations might be diffused more effectively throughout the whole body of the world. For what nation did not then have its people in that City? Or what nations anywhere did not know what Rome had learned? It was here that the opinions of philosophy were to be trampled under foot, here were to be destroyed the vanities of earthly wisdom, here was

to be suppressed the worship of the demons, here was to be abolished the wickedness of all sacrifices, here where all that had been introduced by various false systems was gathered together with painstaking religiosity.

To this City, O most blessed Apostle Peter, you do not fear to come, and sharing your glory comes the Apostle Paul, occupied until now in establishing other churches. You enter this forest of roaring beasts, this ocean of most turbulent depths, with more firmness than you did when you walked upon the sea. You are not afraid of Rome, Mistress of the world, though you trembled before a servant girl of the high priest in the house of Caiaphas. Was the power under Claudius or the cruelty under Nero less than the judgment of Pilate or the fury of the Jews? The strength of love, therefore, overcame your natural disposition of fear; it did not occur to you to give way to fear while you were safeguarding the salvation of those whom you had been told to love. Moreover, you had actually received that disposition of unshakable charity at the time when the profession of your love in the Lord was made firm in the mystery of the threefold question. Nor was anything else asked of your heart's devotion than that for love of him whose sheep you were to feed you should dispense that food by which you had yourself been enriched.

Many signs of miracles, many special gifts of grace, many tests of virtue also increased your faith. You had already instructed the people who had believed in the circumcision; you had already founded the Church at Antioch where the dignity of the name 'Christian' first originated; you had already instructed Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia in the precepts of the Gospel teaching. Not doubting the success of your labours, nor ignorant of the span of your life, you carried the standard of the Cross of Christ to the Roman citadels where by God's design the honour of power and the glory of suffering awaited you.

Blessed Paul, your co-Apostle, a vessel of election and special teacher of the Gentiles, hastening to this City, was associated with you at that time when all innocence, all modesty, all liberty was jeopardized under the power of Nero. His fury, inflamed by an excess of all vices, cast him headlong into such a torrent of madness that he was the first to bring the suffering of a general persecution on the name of Christian, as though the grace of God

could be extinguished by the slaughter of the saints. To them this very agent was their greatest gain, and contempt of this fleeting life became the possession of eternal joy. 'Precious', therefore, 'in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints' (Ps. 115, 15). By no sort of cruelty can that religion be destroyed which is founded on the mystery of the Cross of Christ. The Church does not become smaller by persecutions, she is enlarged; the Lord's field is clothed with a richer crop, and grains which fall one by one spring up multiplied. The thousands of blessed martyrs show how large a progeny these two illustrious offspring of the divine seed have developed. The martyrs, rivalling the Apostles' triumphs, have surrounded our City with purple and crimson clad multitudes; they have, with the honour woven of many gems, crowned her, as it were, with a single diadem.

Dearly beloved, in commemorating all of the saints we should everywhere rejoice over this bulwark which God has prepared for us as a model of patience and a seal of faith, but we should rightfully boast with greater joy over the excellence of these two Fathers whom the grace of God carried to such eminence among the members of the Church that he has set them, like the twin light of the eyes, in the body whose head is Christ. In their merits and virtues, which surpass the gift of speech, we ought to sense no diversity, no division, because election made them alike, labour made them similar, death made them equal. Moreover, as we ourselves have experienced and as our forefathers have proved, we believe and we trust that amid all the labours of this life we are to be helped to obtain the mercy of God by these special patrons, so that inasmuch as we are depressed by our sins so are we lifted up by the merits of the Apostles; through our Lord Jesus Christ who has with the Father and the Holy Spirit the same power, one divinity, forever and ever.

