

# Chapter I

## THE VOCATION OF THE PRIEST TO THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH.

If in the world each one is called by Divine Providence to fulfill those duties which constitute the various occupations of life necessary to the formation and progress of human society, it is no less true that among the priests of the Sanctuary of the Living God,—He Himself has distributed the administration of the graces of Redemption which form the Society and Communion of Saints. In the very creation of the heavens, the Omnipotent has ordained that the individual marvelous revolution of each sphere should form but one part of the beautiful universal unity, worthy of the Being, One and Infinite. The spiritual work of Christ is no less grand, no less worthy of Him Who said in the beginning “Be It Made” and all was made, while Saint John declares that all things came to pass through the Word, and without Him was made nothing that was made.

It belonged to Incarnate Wisdom to so order His mercies to provide for the wants of every nation and every grade of human conditions, and to supply the impotence of those who were to be the dispensers of these mercies even to the end of time. Although man may have attained the sight of only a very few of those secret, divine ways, through which the blessing of Redemption is offered to all mankind, what Saint Paul wrote to Timothy is certain, that God our Savior “*will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the Truth.*”

He who came to save sinners and to provide for all, the means for eternal life, has so ordered the sublime duties of the ministry of His House, that to some He gave Apostolic zeal that they might go forth and bring forth fruit and that their fruit should remain; others He enlightened with Heavenly wisdom against which the enemies of Truth cannot prevail. Many received from the Giver of all good, the power to seal with their blood the divinity of their holy ministry, and they proved that the gates of hell will never prevail against the Faith. Yet others with the gift of miracles have called the nations from the darkness of idolatry to the light of the Gospel. He who has glorified the Heavenly Father with piety and good works, has burned with desire for the salvation of

souls; *and they that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars to all eternity.* (Dan XII-3) Many zealous for building churches, can say with David, "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth." (Psalms XXV-8) Many consecrated to the Sanctuary were called by Divine Providence to the care of the poor, the sick and the ignorant, that they might be the benefactors of suffering humanity. In fine, the needs of individuals, of society and of the entire human race have felt the saving influence of Him Who came for all mankind.

The ministry of Christ our Redeemer is so ordered that the great variety of duties and the distance of time and place instead of keeping souls apart, bind them together yet more closely in the bonds of perfect unity; for those duties are like the waters springing from one and the same divine source, refreshing by their branching streams the aridity of humanity, and leading it on to the ocean of Divinity itself,—its only Good. When the Word Incarnate said: "One is your Master" He suggested the grand Catholic truth that however the operations of the sacerdotal state may be distributed among the many who are called upon to succor this or that particular necessity, yet He Who teaches is One alone, God Himself, from whom spiritual power proceeds. In the Catholic Church the unity of the sacred shines forth like the light of the sun, for there the manifold operations of the Apostolate are stamped with the same visible authority, without which everything would be isolated and powerless. If ignorance, the offspring of vain human learning, did not blind the intelligence, even men of the world at the sight of that apostolate which embraces so many centuries, all societies and all conditions of life, would cry out at least, with the false prophet Balaam: "How beautiful are thy tabernacles, O Jacob, and thy tents, O Israel!" (Numbers XXIV, 5.)

While use of being with Christ in the holy ministry, it is of the highest importance to the Priest to ascertain to what duties he is specially called. The daily happenings of life are the ordinary means which little by little manifest to him His own special mission in the kingdom of Christ on earth. To desire to select absolutely one mode of entrance into the sacerdotal state notwithstanding the lack of those gifts which are required therein would be to call one's self, while our Redeemer

said: "You have not chosen Me; but I have chosen you and have appointed you." (John XV, 16.) He who takes upon himself a holy duty for which his incapacity unfits him, bears the full weight of a divine, eternal responsibility and ordinarily brings forth no fruit which remains. But when Christian prudence permits us to believe ourselves endowed by Almighty God with certain qualities, exalted for the fulfillment of the obligations annexed to the sacerdotal state, then one may reason that he has been called thereto. An upright intention, purity of conduct, docility towards him who has the spiritual direction of our souls, prepare the way for the manifestation of the Will of God, which manifestation if it does not become absolute certainty, is at least that moral probability which can never be accused of imprudence, and which ought to serve as a guide to the most timorous conscience. Absolutely certain of our vocation has never been granted through ordinary means, although we may be allowed to believe its existence, when time and results have, so to speak, proved the reality of one's election.

Few have that generous disinterestedness in their choice of the varied duties incumbent on the priesthood, which moved Saint Peter and the Apostles to abandon human interests, which often seem determined to oppose the call of Heaven. The sublimity of this career, however, is so great a boon, that the refusal to follow it, on account of any human attachment whatsoever, would render us the objects of those terrible words of Christ: "Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple. (Luke XIV, 33.)

Of all the duties of the priesthood, that of the Propagation of the Faith among peoples who know nothing of it, is the most excellent and meritorious. He who fulfills this evangelical mission, together with the example of a pure life and good works, and the continual preaching of the mysteries of salvation was expressly commended by the Apostle when he wrote to Timothy: "Let the priest that rule well, be esteemed worthy of double honor; especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." But when a priest is called, as was the Prophet Jeremias by the voice of God Himself, and assured that he has been sanctified and made a prophet unto the nations, he could in truth make the answer: "Ah, ah, Lord God: Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child." In fact, who will believe himself, I do not say worthy, but even able to be made

“a minister according to the dispensation of God, that I may fulfill the word of God. The mystery which hath been hidden from ages and generations.” Who will be able to have made “known to him the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles?” (Col. I.) With the reason then did Jeremias call himself a child at the sight of so great a mission. But the Evangelical word is the work of Christ,—it has naught in common with human ignorance and the wisdom of this world; as the Apostle says: “The foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that he may confound the strong,” (I Cor. I, 27), and he also gives the most convincing reason for this truth when he adds “that no flesh should glory in His sight.” (v. 29)

One who is called to the ministry of the word should like the Prophet often humble in the contemplation of his own incapacity and childish ignorance, for even the most profound studies is sacred doctrine become unfruitful in the mouth of the most eloquent, without that divine inspiration of Him Who is the way, the truth and the life. The sublimity of speech and of human wisdom did not accompany the coming of Saint Paul among the people of Corinth, but, as he himself says, the knowledge only of Jesus Christ and Him Crucified, that their “faith might not stand on the wisdom of men but on the power of God.” (I Cor. II, 5.) By virtue of the Cross alone ought the Priest Apostle, with the lively faith of Saint Peter let down his net into the troubled sea of this life; sure that sooner or later his Divine Master will make him an instrument of salvation to many. Vainly would one enter upon an apostolic career, even in regions most remote, buried in the darkness of ignorance of Christian truth, or blinded by the errors and extravagances of heresy, unless with an entire self-abandonment to Him Who has said “Going, therefore, teach ye all nations. Behold I am with you.” (Matt. XXVIII, 19). The foolish fear of lacking the necessities of life would be a want of faith in the Son of God Who gave us this command: “Be not solicitous, therefore, saying What shall we eat or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?” (Matt. VI, 31.) Amid doubts such as these what would become of the faith of the ambassadors of Christ? The holy Gospel assures us that our Heavenly Father Who feeds the birds of the air and arrays the lilies of the field with a splendor more

dazzling than Solomon's will have a care to give His laborers their hire. Let them seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice and all these things shall be added unto them. This is the promise of our Redeemer to missionaries of the Gospel: whoever doubts it has little faith and in truth is unworthy of the Apostolical ministry.

The comforts and riches of this present life should be despised by one who has left all things, in order to say with Saint Peter to the Divine Master: "Behold we have left all things and have followed Thee." (Matt. XIX, 27.) He Who has promised to give for one such renunciation a hundred-fold in this world and life eternal in the next, will provide for every need. The preacher of the Gospel may apply to himself what Christ declared on this subject to His Apostles: "The laborer is worthy of his hire . . . and into what city soever you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you." (Luke X, 7-8.) The grace of Providence shall go before him, disposing the hearts of the people in various ways to minister to his needs, that one may recall these words: "When I sent you without purse and scrip and shoes, did you want any thing?" (Luke XX, 35.)

Such should be the mien of him who preaches the truth confirming it with the brightest example: charity, zeal, disinterestedness, piety, modesty and patience should make of him a living image of his Divine Master, Who set example before precept. Then will be verified in him those words of Holy Writ: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, of them that bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. X, 15.)

Placing obstacles to the vocation of a person who is well qualified and desirous of dedicating himself to foreign missions is to oppose one's self to the Divine Mercy of our Saviour, who, "seeing the multitude, had compassion on them; because they were distressed and lying like sheep that have no shepherd. Then he said to his disciples: 'The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few'" (Matt. IX, 36, 37.) The consequences of such opposition are dangerous, both for him who hears the call and for him who hinders. For the desire of a close yet brief companionship and the fear of a temporary separation upon this earth might draw down tribulation and chastisements in this present life and everlasting separation in the next; then would be verified that

word of Christ: "A man's enemies shall be they of his own household." (Matt. X, 36.)

In place of putting stumbling-blocks in the way, parents and friends ought to glory in seeing their nearest and dearest dedicate themselves so particularly to the propagation of that same Faith which they themselves have received through no merit of their own, and for which they can never sufficiently thank God. It might here be remarked that one of the principal reasons why so few consecrate themselves to the Apostolate is the lack of reflection among the clergy in Catholic countries upon the pitiable condition of those nations who have not received the truth of holy religion. Many priests born and educated in the unity of the Faith have never had the experience of feeling to the quick that anguish of heart inflicted by the sight of the destruction of souls mid the darkness of ignorance and heresy. If they would but know the gift of God, the blessing of being born in the abundance of spiritual riches, of sitting at the Eucharistic Table every day, of frequenting the House of God at their pleasure, of having ever ready to hand the divine remedies for the cure of every spiritual malady, in a word, of enjoying in their degree all the mysteries of the goodness and greatness of our Redeemer, the while nations are yet deprived of these blessings, then would they feel a more efficacious zeal burning within their hearts, and not content with merely being compassionating from afar the miseries of others, would put their hands to the work, mindful of that command of Christ: "Go, teach all nations." God grant that no priest imitates that rich man, who, surrounded by all the good things of this world, contents himself with desiring necessary food for the famished poor, while he himself is too tardy and too avaricious to supply their needs. It should be the glory of Christ's servants not only to hear His call, but to be in reality the instruments for the propagation of the Gospel, the light of the world.

It is almost incredible that the goods of life,—parents, friends, love of country, and worse, love of riches, can be to any a hindrance to the Apostolic vocation. Motives of such a nature would shame even one who is willing to sacrifice the very least of the gifts of Heaven, and would show a littleness of soul, of which it is better not to speak, that we may disclaim the very supposition that there exist any individuals

in the divine career of the Priesthood who are willing by like weaknesses to belittle such career. Preaching the Faith is a work so meritorious, so worthy of the clergy, so like that of the Messiah, that it should revive the noblest sentiments of the heart and produce a superabundance of Evangelical laborers, yet Christ tells us the contrary: "The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few." (Luke X, 2.) Let us rouse ourselves then, and let us open eyes of Evangelical charity, and if we are called, let us direct our steps wherever the work is great and difficult, but where with the help of Him Who sent us, we shall open the ways for the Gospel and our labors will succeed: "I have planted, Apollo watered: but God gave the increase." (I Cor. III, 6.)

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## Chapter II.

### THE DEPARTURE AND VOYAGE OF THE MISSIONARY OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS FROM ROME TO CINCINNATI IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Not without difficulty is it for an ecclesiastical departing for the country of his missions, to bid farewell to parent and friends, and native land, and set out towards that region to which the Lord had destined him, for the salvation of others, and for his own sanctification. This material separation does not hinder his bearing with him that sincere filial and fraternal love towards those who have done so much for his education and have a natural claim upon his heart. Yet under such circumstances one ought not to reflect upon the material aspect of the separation from beloved friends and native land, but he ought to have before his eyes the sublime, divine motive which breaks the strongest ties of nature in order to make of them a sacrifice to the will of Heaven. To the flesh such a farewell seems cruel and unjust, but to the spirit of the Christian it becomes sweet and mild, for it is the yoke of Christ. Such was the case of a son, who for the last time embraced a tender father who on every occasion had shown his predilection for him, and who, five years before had besought his son to stay and one day close his eyes. But of what avail could this strong tender love of a father be to

one who willed to renounce the world and take upon himself the discipline of a cloister? Could it silence the voice of Heaven and draw aside from his vocation one who felt himself interiorly called to separate from the world, and who believed that he would openly resist the Will of the Lord, if he listened to the allure of flesh and blood? Thanks to the Giver of all good, these whisperings excited by the pleadings of a father's heart were calmed by the words of Christ: "He who renounceth not father, mother, brothers and sisters cannot be my disciple."

In 1828 when obedience destined our missionary for the United States of America, he left Rome, and revisited his native city of Milan after five years absence. Then the farewell to father, beloved sisters and dear brothers was made with all that tranquility, which the certainty of doing the will of God could secure. The affection and the duty towards parents are not all diminished by such occurrences in the life of a Christian; a son fulfilling his mission upon earth, renders to his father that true and just recompense which is due for all the cares and anxieties spent upon his education. A father should consider himself happy to see his sons follow out the career assigned them by divine Providence; since in such case only do they correspond to the purpose of their birth in the world, and recompense the labor spent in forming them to virtue and eternal life.

When the last farewells were over, he left his native land with little hope then of ever seeing it again, and yet without overwhelming grief of heart. In truth we have no lasting home on earth; a Christian's native country is wherever God calls him; therefore for the man called to the Apostolic ministry the fact of leaving the place of his birth to go into missionary countries was rather a setting out in search of his own country. On the other hand he who departs for an object worthy a disciple of Christ, accustoms himself to consider the whole world as his own country because his affections are in no wise circumscribed by the limits of one city or by the boundaries of a kingdom, but more widely do they extend over the vast number of nations, and the boundless seas; so that in this sense also the word of Christ seems to be verified wherein He promises us a hundred fold for what we have given up. Behold, a hundred cities, a hundred nations under different skies become our magnificent fatherland. Oh, how generous is our God! The

friends, then, the companions, left behind in that narrow corner of the world which has seen us born into the world and grown to manhood! O, they are not lost, while a sincere affection for them can be and ought to be kept alive; and meanwhile the missionary as he passes on to new lands, goes to find new friends, to increase the number of them and to multiply the consolations of Christian friendship, and because the chains that bind them together in the propagation of the truth of the Gospel are not the work of chance but the fruit of virtue, it follows that such friendships are nobler, more lasting than those of our youth. So does God reward in full, that transitory anguish inflicted by the separation from parents, friends, native country; Almighty God is not outdone in generosity; He never accepts the smallest sacrifice from a human heart without pouring upon it His divine munificence in abundance even in this life.

The journey of a missionary to the country that Divine Providence has appointed to him is always accompanied by circumstances from which he may derive many experiences useful for the fulfillment of his ministry,—more especially in acquiring that necessary confidence on which he must lean in future needs. Such were the lessons that he learned during his passage from Rome to the city of Cincinnati in the United States of America. The visits made to the churches and sanctuaries of Florence, Bologna, Milan, Genoa, Lyons, Paris, and to the Capital of the Catholic world, monuments which down the ages have been the glory of Religion and Art, had yet more deeply impressed upon him that veneration and spirit of piety which should accompany every act of the Christian, yet more of him who is called to preach the truth of the Gospel.

Experience has taught us that when God's minister finds himself alone, without a church in the country of the infidel, deprived of all external objects that promote piety, the holy remembrance of things that he has seen in the midst of Catholic surroundings supplies in part the want of such reminders. On such occasions, memory vivified by Faith, bears the lonely spirit into the temples of the Living God, before our tabernacles where, to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, are rendered those honors by which man manifest the secret desires of his heart. In truth when he was in the forests and vast solitudes of the heart of North

America often did he imagine himself present at the sacred rites of the European Churches, joining in the solemn canticles of Divine Worship. His imagination of itself turned to those sacred objects, when he was obliged to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice in a log hut, or in the wigwam of a savage, upon an altar not deserving even the name of table, — sometimes constructed of the bark of trees.

Almighty God even made use of the memory of His temples to excite in one an ardent desire to build them wherever the Catholic Faith spread. It was impossible to express in words the holy anxiety which wrung his heart and overcame the great difficulties involved in the building of a Church, an anxiety in great part caused by his having seen in a Catholic countries the vast number of churches and sacred ornaments in all their magnificence. In truth, at times it seemed to him that the things belonging to the service of the Holy Sacrifice were not impartially distributed; he used to say to himself, that in some places, Catholics had a superabundance of everything to be desired and that here where the need is greatest they do not possess even the things most indispensable for Divine worship. Making one's self familiar, therefore, with everything great and sacred in Catholicity will ever be of the greatest advantage to one setting out for distant missions for it will assist his piety when, lonely and deprived of the sight of God's temples, the memory of them will fill the void in his heart, in a measure; it will give an impulse to his zeal for the building of churches, notwithstanding the many and serious difficulties to be overcome by one who puts his hand to a work so necessary for extending the Faith and the worship of the true God.

But let us follow our traveler. After making the journey from Rome to Lyons with the Vicar-General of Cincinnati, he was left there alone at the end of July, to make his way towards the new world. Somewhat of fear and doubt made itself felt in such a situation, putting to the proof his vocation and his confidence in Almighty God's disposal of him. The idea of setting out alone for a far-off country, on the other side of the Atlantic, without a knowledge of the language of its inhabitants, to a youth of twenty-two without experience, would have been rather imprudent had it not been justified by religious obedience, that obedience which would be a safe guide in traveling to the end of the world,

if that were necessary. In reality, if a religious man takes holy Obedience as his guide during the great, mysterious journey from this world to the immense eternal regions of God's Kingdom, how can he doubt that Obedience will conduct him safely back and forth to any quarter of this little globe of ours? See how the vow, folly in the eyes of the world, by its power overcomes worldly wisdom itself and inspires that courage and energy of soul that will be sought in vain elsewhere.

The Lord so disposed events that our Ecclesiastic was obliged to prolong his stay in France for two months, in the little Seminary of Said Nicholas, where the charity of the Superiors had offered him an asylum. Such delay was of the greatest advantage, since during that time practising with the good seminarists then enjoying a vacation, he learned the French language, an acquisition which after his ordination to the priesthood became indispensable in the exercise of his ministry. While he was anxious concerning the great loss of time in regard to his long journey, the result convinced him that he could not have spent those two months more profitably. Thus do accidents which seem adverse often co-operate for good and serve to make ready God's ways hidden from us! Moreover this proves that we must always believe there is some design to Providence in the involuntary delays which so often happen in travelling.

On the fifth day of October, 1828, were unfurled the sails of the American ship, the "Edward Quesnel," in which our young Ecclesiastic had secured his passage to New York, and he left the shores of Europe in the firm hope of seeing, when it should so please God, the lands discovered by Columbus. For some days the winds were contrary, and as if jealous of their dominion, refused to permit the ship a peaceful passage across the immensity of the sea. But the fury of the elements calmed down at last, and a favorable breeze from the east sped the barque towards the longed-for harbor. It was a pleasant sight to see on a clear day, all the sails full-spread, the sea peaceful, the sky pure and serene, companions joyous and full of hope, making their calculations on the day in which they flattered themselves they would happily reach port. Like to this is the living, true image of those thoughtless men, who, founding their happiness upon the uncertain things of this world, dream of future pleasures which prove in the event to be naught but

shadows and illusions. In fact fleeting was the joy of the sailors; the winds howled both from north and west; the ocean's billows rose threateningly, and the ship was forced to rise and plunge with the troubled foaming waters; the rigging could barely resist the fury of the wind and mitigate the motion of the tempest-tossed craft; then all became silent in the saloon, for he was fortunate who could keep himself steady in his couch. The missionary in spite of the tempest enjoyed the sublime sight of the ocean, when unchained and storm-driven, it seemed to have sworn the destruction of the man who defied its wrath. Clinging to the main-mast he could see the broken, imperious waves venting their wrath upon the ship, often as if striving to engulf it, flooding the deck with their crest, but conquered by man's power, breaking and passing off, the wind howling unceasingly among the masts and cordage seemed to predict death and ruin. The heavens all darkened, crashing with thunder, denied to the gaze of the voyager even the slightest gleam of hope for safety. The missionary's imagination, stirred by this spectacle so really frightful, involuntarily was borne on to meditate on that last catastrophe described by the eloquence of the Son of God:

“And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves.

“Men withering away for fear an expectation of what shall come upon the whole world.” (Luke XXI, 25, 26.)

A favorable wind succeeded the storm and already on November 17th the sight of land gladdened the hearts of the voyagers, but vainly, for the wind suddenly changed and blew from the west such fury that one might have said the ship had taken flight to Europe; thus for five days she was driven backward over the wide sea, until the Supreme Ruler of the waves set her again upon the right course, and on the morning of the fourteenth she calmly neared the wished-for coast. When men are agitated by stormy passions in the dark night of this vale of tears, if they but knew how to use that tireless industry, perseverance and patience taught us by the mariner! then would all arrive at the port of eternal salvation.

Some days of delay in the great city of New York, convinced our

traveler that the grand things of this world are ever in close relationship with the general corruption of morals; thence he passed on to the beautiful, beautifully planned city of Philadelphia, and from there to the Archbishopal city of Baltimore. During this short journey, he realized the great inconvenience of not knowing the English language, and of being forced like the Patriarch Joseph in Egypt to hear a language that he understood not. There yet remained about eight hundred miles of a journey, partly by land, partly by water, before reaching Cincinnati, the place of his destination; he was without a companion who spoke one language known to him, and moreover uncertain whether the money at his disposal was sufficient for so long a journey; yet he leaned upon Divine Providence, greater than all treasure. On the first day that he spent in the stage-coach, an American gentleman perceived his extreme embarrassment in the offices and taverns on account of his inability to make himself understood and touched with compassion towards the stranger gave him to understand by signs that he himself would have everything paid for and attended to both by land and by water as far as Cincinnati, and that there the sum expended would be shown to him. In short from that morning the young Ecclesiastic had nothing to do but take his place in the carriage, to go to the steam-boat, or seat himself at the table whenever he was called; so in a few days he reached the place of his destination. His kind protector then wrote upon a card the sum paid out for him on the journey; but perceiving that the poor European had no sufficient money, he smiled and made him a sign just to go to the Catholic Church, which building was seen not far distant. Who would not in such case have given thanks with all his heart to Divine charity for the particular protection under which that charity had so happily led him to the end of his long journey! Had he not reason to say with the holy Tobias: "He conducted me and brought me safe again; we are filled with all good things through him"? (Tob. XII, 3.)