FAITH HARD AS A ROCK AND GOD'S CHISEL

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Beloved in Christ the Lord.

The main hero of the Gospel scene whose account we have just heard is undoubtedly Saint Peter. Saint Peter, who confesses faith in the divinity of the Lord Jesus, who confesses that He is the Christ, and thus the Messiah, the Saviour awaited by the whole world, and in particular by the Jewish nation, the Saviour whom the prophets foretold, that He is the Son of the living God, the living and true God, as opposed to the whole mass of false and dead gods. Those of whom the Psalmist says: they have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not; they have feet to walk, and walk not.

Saint Peter makes this confession of faith, which does not come entirely from him. For Saint Peter does not yet, in truth, fully realise who the Lord Jesus is, but this act of faith is given to him, as it were, from heaven. That is why Christ the Lord declares: "Blessed art thou, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven."

This cornerstone scene reminds us that the virtue, the supernatural virtue of faith, comes from the Lord God. The man who seeks God in truth will find Him. And man must show a proper disposition, a preparation, in order to believe, to confess that Jesus Christ is God, to confess faith in the living and true God. This is something we very often forget. That faith does not come from man, does not come from us, that we only become, as it were, a vessel well prepared so that the Lord God can fill us with the supernatural virtue of faith.

And connected with this is something that may fill us with dread: that faith can be lost. Faith can be lost, because the Lord God will take away faith, the supernatural virtue of faith, from the one who does not respect this greatest treasure here on earth, who despises faith, who falsifies faith.

CHRIST'S QUESTION

My dear brethren, Christ the Lord asks His disciples today who men say the Son of Man is. If He stood among us and asked us, we would begin a list. Well, Catholics consider You God. Jews consider You the greatest enemy, a false Messiah. Muslims a prophet; pagans reject You or treat You as one of the many elements of a great pantheon of deities. But what answer would we give if Christ addressed this question directly to us? If He did not ask: who do men say that I am, but: who do you say that I am? Who am I according to you?

And a whole mass of contemporary Catholics simply do not hold anything. A whole mass of contemporary Catholics have never put this question to themselves: who is Jesus Christ? Who is the living God? Indeed, a whole mass of contemporary priests and hierarchs have never put this question to themselves either. A whole mass of those who call themselves Catholics simply do not have the supernatural virtue of faith. And dressing up in cassocks, chasubles and mitres will not help here. Faith comes from God. And a man who is unworthy of this great gift will simply lose it.

Yes, my dear brethren, on this feast of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul we must make an examination of conscience and ask ourselves how we have treated the Catholic faith in our lives. Are we a well-prepared vessel, so that the Lord God can fill us with holy faith? Or perhaps, my dear brethren, like a whole mass of contemporary Catholics, we have the name of Jesus on our lips? We can make the Sign of the Cross quite smoothly, but in truth we do not care at all about this strange prophet from Nazareth. Just one of many colourful figures in the history of mankind. Who am I to you? Are we able, with Saint Peter, to confess: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God? Do we realise that in order to utter these words with true faith, we need God's grace? We need supernatural faith. "Simon, flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven."

Dear faithful, let us give thanks for the gift of faith, which was given to us without any merits of our own.

And let us remind ourselves unceasingly how much we ought to care for this treasure, for if not, we may lose the faith. Simply lose it. The history of the Church shows a whole mass of Catholics who lost the faith. Who lost the faith.

THE DIVINE SCULPTOR

Christ the Lord wishes to support us with His grace, He wishes us to become like rocks. Hard men, men resistant to all life's shocks and storms. And each of us ought to ask fervently for this today: that the Lord Jesus make me a rock. A rock that nothing will be able to crumble, a rock that nothing will be able to shake, that nothing will be able to move. For such a faith, hard as rock, we wish today to ask fervently through the intercession of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

This confession which we hear today from the lips of Saint Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This confession was engraved in the life of the holy Apostle, in the life of every saint, and it ought to be engraved in our life too. But this engraving is bound up with a series of hard trials. When a sculptor carves in marble, he strikes with the chisel again and again with great force, yet without those blows a beautiful sculpture would never emerge from the piece of stone. And it is likewise with our human life. The divine Sculptor strikes at us with a supernatural chisel, and it hurts us. We often feel the force of this divine blow in our lives, but without this divine chisel we would remain a shapeless piece of stone.

Saint Peter experienced this divine chisel in his life. He also experienced his own wretchedness, when on Holy Thursday he three times denied his Master, the one whom he followed, the one who called him to apostolic service. Three times he denied the Saviour. This too was the divine chisel, which struck at his pride. "Lord, though all should forsake You, I will be with You," he solemnly assured Him at the Last Supper. A few hours passed, and before the cock crowed, Saint Peter three times became a traitor.

And the answer to this threefold denial of the Lord Jesus, to the betrayal he had committed, was, after the Resurrection, the Saviour's threefold question: "Peter, do you love me?" The Lord Jesus, after all, knows everything as God, yet He asked Saint Peter three times: "Do you love me?" The Evangelist noted that after the third question Saint Peter was grieved. But it was necessary for the Lord Jesus to ask Saint Peter three times so that Saint Peter, in giving his answer, in confessing his love for the Saviour, might wipe away the shame of his denial, of his betrayal on Holy Thursday.

And so it is, my dear brethren, and so it will be in our lives. Every betrayal of ours, every denial of the Saviour requires that the disgrace connected with it be washed away by an act of love. Of true love, not sweet, not saccharine, not plush, not pink, not Hollywood love, but the love that requires the blow of the chisel. God, as Holy Scripture says, scourges those whom He loves and chastises those whom He receives as sons.

And we see this divine scourging in the lives of the holy patrons of today's feast, and following their example we wish to pray that the Lord God, regardless of our disloyalty and our weakness, may not cease to strike at us with His divine chisel, that He may not cease to sculpt us so that a beautiful work may come forth from us. A beautiful work that will adorn the Kingdom of Heaven.

Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, pray for us.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.