

**“Infallibility and Indefectibility. Are these yet sustainable in light of doctrinal falsehoods and moral scandals which abound in the Church today?”
Call to Holiness Conference, October 16, 2021, Detroit**

The Catholic Church is indestructible; *i.e.*, it will remain till the end of the world, for Christ said: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (*Matt.* xvi. 18). “The Church,” says St. Ambrose, “is like the moon; it may wane, but it will never be destroyed; it may be darkened, but it can never disappear.”

“The Church has its stages, of persecution and of peace. It seems to wane, like the moon, but it is not so.” In fact, its disappearing is actually a decrease in luminous intensity. “The moon undergoes a decrease in light not in the body... The lunar disc remains intact” (*Hexaemeron*, IV, 2, 7). “The bark of the Church,” says St. Anselm, “may be swept by the waves, but it can never sink because Christ is there.” “The Church,” says St. Jerome, “is like Peter’s bark. When the storm is at its height the Lord wakes from His sleep and commands peace.” Persecution purifies the Church; even if millions fall away, it is not a loss but a cleansing.

The holiness of the Church comes from its unity with its Head, Christ. This unity with Christ that makes the Church holy is incomplete on earth but will be absolute at the end of time, in the new Jerusalem. “The holy Church has two lives: one in time and the other in eternity. We should not separate them, as we should do were we to consider *Ecclesia deorsum* (the Church below) as a stranger to *Ecclesia sursum* (the Church above). We must always keep a firm hold on the continuity of the one Church in and through the diversity of her successive states, just as we see the unity of Christ in his life on earth, his death, and his glorious Resurrection.” (Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986, p. 79)

Cardinal Charles Journet said: “However mysterious in itself, the divine virtue that forms and maintains the Church is revealed, inadequately no doubt, in one of its effects: the marvelous permanence of the Church. To anyone who is alive, to the impermanence and fragility of all known societies, the uninterrupted substantial continuity of the Church, in the midst of the revolutions of the Western world, must surely seem a sociological fact for which no natural explanation will suffice. The permanence of the Church under one same hierarchy is not a mystery to be seen only by the eye of faith; it is a fact verifiable in history; and its miraculous character bears witness to the divine origin of the Church.” In this sense Bossuet could write: “Besides the advantage which the Church of Jesus Christ alone possesses in being founded on miraculous and divine facts openly proclaimed without fear of contradiction at the very time when they happened, here, for those who live in later times, we

have a permanent miracle confirming the truth of all the others: the persistence of a religion consistently victorious over all the errors that attempt to destroy it.”

St. Cyprian of Carthage said: “When the devil saw that the worship of idols was abolished, and the heathen temples emptied, he bethought him of a new poison, and led men into error under cover of the Christian religion, the poison of false doctrine and pride.” The misdeeds of some members of the Hierarchy, or abuses occurring within the Church are due not to the Church, but to the perversity of men. Even among the apostles there was a traitor, and Christ compared some members of the Church to weeds and worthless fish. Regarding the Christian attitude in the presence of possible failures of the members of the hierarchy: There can be and indeed, there were fallible decisions of the members of the hierarchy, when they favor or spread an error (e.g. Pope Honorius I, Pope John XXII, some affirmations of the Second Vatican Council, some affirmations of Pope Francis), a defective and partly ambiguous liturgy (e.g. the Mass of Pope Paul VI), an unjust penalty (e.g. the excommunication of St. Athanasius, the condemnation of St. Joan of Arc) and plain immoral life of some high ranking clergy (e.g. Pope Alexander VI). To appeal, like St. Joan of Arc, to the tribunal of God against decisions of this nature, to decide “to obey God rather than men,” will not therefore be to oppose God to the Church, on the contrary, it will be to oppose the will of the infallible Church, which is no other than that of God, to the obvious error, disowned in advance, of its inferior tribunals and of its fallible ministers. “When the superiors,” said Saint John of the Cross, “would no longer have anyone who dared to warn them or contradict them when they erred ... let the Order be held to be lost and totally released.” If what in rare cases a Church authority prescribe appears to favor ambiguity in faith, be a sin, an injustice to be done, it is also forbidden to obey. These failings are, however, partial and precarious, and the principles capable of reducing them and of eliminating them one day remain in the Church constantly active.

Catholics are not identical with the Catholicism. The faults and deficiencies of Catholics and even of the members of the Hierarchy do not engage Catholicism as such. Catholicism is not responsible for providing an alibi for the shortcomings of Catholics and the members of the Hierarchy. The best apologetics are not to justify Catholics and members of the Hierarchy when they are evidently wrong, but on the contrary to mark these faults, that they do not touch the substance of Catholicism, and that they only better highlight the virtue of a religion which is still alive in spite of these faults. The Church is a mystery, she has her head hidden in heaven, her visibility does not adequately manifest this her hidden head. The great glory of the Church is to be holy with sinful members. (see Jacques Maritain, *Religion et Culture*, Paris, 1930, p. 60)

St. Augustine said: “The Church will totter when her foundation totters. But how shall Christ totter? ... as long as Christ does not totter, neither shall the Church totter in eternity.” (Enarr. in Ps. 103, 2, 5) and “The same is the holy Church, the one Church, the true Church, the Catholic Church, fighting against all heresies: fight, the Church can; be fought down, it cannot. As for heresies, they all went out of it, like unprofitable branches pruned from the vine.” (Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed, 1:6)

St. John Henry Newman said, that there must be the primacy of truth over peace. Only the unity in truth can establish true peace. St. John Henry Newman said: “Concord is so eminently the perfection of the Christian temper, conduct, and discipline, and it had been so wonderfully exemplified in the previous history of the Church, that it was almost unavoidable in a heathen soldier and statesman to regard it as the sole precept of the Gospel. ... It had been predicted by Him, who came to offer peace to the world, that, in matter of fact, that gift would be changed into the sword of discord; mankind being offended by the doctrine, more than they were won over by the amiableness of Christianity. But He alone was able thus to discern through what a succession of difficulties Divine truth advances to its final victory. Especially they who receive scarcely more of His teaching than the instinct of civilization recognizes (and Constantine must, on the whole, be classed among such), view the religious dissensions of the Church as simply evil, and (as they would fain prove) contrary to Christ’s own precepts; whereas in fact they are but the history of truth in its first stage of trial, when it aims at being “pure,” before it is “peaceable;” and are reprehensible only so far as baser passions mix themselves with that true loyalty towards God, which desires His glory in the first place, and only in the second place, the tranquility and good order of society.” (The Arians of the Fourth Century, London 1908, p. 244)

There are those churchmen who advocate the preservation of doctrinal truth, but who are in favour of a vastness and openness in formulations. In contrast to the dogmatic relativizations stood the attitude of the Church Fathers. St. Leo the Great said: “Not only in the exercise of virtue and the observance of the commandments, but also in the path of faith, strait and difficult is the way which leads to life; and it requires great pains, and involves great risks, to walk without stumbling along the one footway of sound doctrine, amid the uncertain opinions and the plausible untruths of the unskillful, and to escape all peril of mistake when the toils of error are on every side.” (Serm. 25:1) And St. John Henry Newman explained, saying: “In the judgment of the early Church, the path of doctrinal truth is narrow; but, in the judgment of the world in all ages, it is so broad as to be no path at all. The maintenance of the faith is considered by the world to be a strife of words, perverse disputings, curious questionings,

and unprofitable technicality, though by the Fathers of the Church it is considered necessary to salvation.” (Historical Sketches, vol. I, London, 1908, 391)

“Liberalism in religion is the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion, but that one creed is as good as another, and this is the teaching which is gaining substance and force daily. It is inconsistent with any recognition of any religion, as *true*. It teaches that all are to be tolerated, for all are matters of opinion. Revealed religion is not a truth, but a sentiment and a taste; not an objective fact, not miraculous; and it is the right of each individual to make it say just what strikes his fancy. Devotion is not necessarily founded on faith. Men may go to Protestant Churches and to Catholic, may get good from both and belong to neither. They may fraternize together in spiritual thoughts and feelings, without having any views at all of doctrine in common, or seeing the need of them. Since, then, religion is so personal a peculiarity and so private a possession, we must of necessity ignore it in the intercourse of man with man. If a man puts on a new religion every morning, what is that to you? It is as impertinent to think about a man's religion as about his sources of income or his management of his family. Religion is in no sense the bond of society.” (Biglietto Speech, May 12, 1879)

The apostasy within the civil society and the Catholic Church can be seen as a beginning of the era of the Antichrist. St. John Henry Newman already said this in his time. The naturalistic tendencies of the modern epoch try to ignore everything supernatural in education and formation. St. John Henry Newman said: “Is there no reason to fear that some such Apostasy is gradually preparing, gathering, hastening on in this very day? For is there not at this very time a special effort made almost all over the world, that is, every here and there, more or less in sight or out of sight, in this or that place, but most visibly or formidably in its most civilized and powerful parts, an effort to do without Religion? Is there not an opinion avowed and growing, that a nation has nothing to do with Religion; that it is merely a matter for each man's own conscience?—which is all one with saying that we may let the Truth fail from the earth without trying to continue it in and on after our time. Is there not a vigorous and united movement in all countries to cast down the Church of Christ from power and place? Is there not a feverish and ever-busy endeavor to get rid of the necessity of Religion in public transactions?” (Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects, London 1907, The Patristical Idea of Antichrist. Lecture 1, 59)

St. Johan Henry Newman was not afraid to speak of a worldwide conspiracy against the Church because the perceptible facts reveal a coherent plan: “Surely, there is at this day a confederacy of evil, marshalling its hosts from all parts of the world, organizing itself, taking its measures, enclosing the

Church of Christ as in a net, and preparing the way for a general Apostasy from it. Whether this very Apostasy is to give birth to Antichrist, or whether he is still to be delayed, as he has already been delayed so long, we cannot know; but at any rate this Apostasy, and all its tokens and instruments, are of the Evil One, and savor of death. Far be it from any of us to be of those simple ones who are taken in that snare which is circling around us! Far be it from us to be seduced with the fair promises in which Satan is sure to hide his poison! Do you think he is so unskillful in his craft, as to ask you openly and plainly to join him in his warfare against the Truth? No; he offers you bait to tempt you. He promises you civil liberty; he promises you equality; he promises you trade and wealth; he promises you a remission of taxes; he promises you reform. . . . He shows you how to become as gods. Then he laughs and jokes with you, and gets intimate with you; he takes your hand, and gets his fingers between yours, and grasps them, and then you are his. Shall we Christians allow ourselves to have lot or part in this matter? Shall we, even with our little finger, help on the Mystery of Iniquity, which is travailing for birth, and convulsing the earth with its pangs? "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, . . . lest you be workers together with God's enemies, and be opening the way for the Man of Sin, the son of perdition." (ibid, pp. 60-61)

"In one point alone the heresies seem universally to have agreed,—in hatred to the Church (tradition). This might at that time be considered one of her surest and most obvious Notes. She was that body of which all sects, however divided among themselves, spoke ill; according to the prophecy, "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of His household." They disliked and they feared her; they did their utmost to overcome their mutual differences, in order to unite against her (Church)." (An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, London 1909, Chap. 6, p. 253)

"Both good and bad were to be expected in the Catholic Church. . . . I do confess that bad is in the Church, but not that it springs from the Church's teaching or system, but, as our Lord and His Apostles predicted it would be, in the Church, but not of it. He says, "It must *needs be* that scandals come;" "many are called, few are chosen;" "the kingdom of heaven is like a net which gathereth of every kind." . . . the Church has two sides, a human and a divine, and that everything that is human is liable to error. Whether, so considered, it has in matter of fact erred must be determined by history. . . . I have no difficulty in supposing that Popes have erred, or Councils have erred, or populations have erred, in human aspects, because, as St. Paul says, "We have this treasure in earthly vessels," speaking of the Apostles themselves. No one is impeccable, and no collection of men." (Letters and Diaries, Vol., 27, Five Letters, pp. 362; 365)

“I grant that the Church's teaching, which in its formal exhibitions is divine, has been at times perverted by its officials, representatives, subjects, who are human. I grant that it has not done so much good as it might have done. I grant that in its action, which is human, it is a fair mark for criticism or blame. But what I maintain is, that it has done an incalculable amount of good, that it has done good of a special kind, such as no other historical polity, or teaching, or worship has done, and that that good has come from its professed principles, and that its shortcomings and omissions have come from a neglect or an interruption of its principles.” (ibid., p. 365)

“You can no more make the Catholic and Protestant *ethos* one, than you can mix oil and vinegar. Catholics have a moral life of their own, as the early Christians had, and the same life as they—our doctrines and practices come of it; we are and always shall be militant against the world and its spirit, whether the world be considered within the Church's pale or external to it.” (ibid., p. 370)

“The *ethos* of the Catholic Church is what it was of old time, and whatever or whoever quarrels with Catholicism now, quarrels virtually, and would have quarreled if alive 1800 years ago, with the Christianity of Apostles and Evangelists.” (ibid., p. 358)

St. John Henry Newman made the following encouraging statement about the triumph of the Church in midst of the battle against the evil and the world: “It is no new thing then with the Church, in a time of confusion or of anxiety, when offences abound, and the enemy is at her gates, that her children, far from being dismayed, or rather glorying in the danger, as vigorous men exult in trials of their strength—it is no new thing, I say, that they should go forth to do her work, as though she were in the most balmy days of her prosperity. ... We have upon us the omens of success in the recollections of the past; we read upon our banners the names of many an old field of battle and of glory; we are strong in the strength of our fathers, and we mean to do, in our humble measure, what Saints have done before us. ... It needs no heroism in us to face such a time as this, and to make light of it; for we are Catholics. We have the experience of eighteen hundred years. ... It is not one or two or a dozen defeats, if we had them, which will reverse the majesty of the Catholic Name” (Discourses to Mixed Congregations, Discourse 12. Prospects of the Catholic Missioner).

The fidelity in the Catholic faith remains usually a minority phenomenon, as St. John Henry Newman said: “I have all that time thought that a time of wide-spread infidelity was coming, and through all those years the waters have in fact been rising as a deluge. I look for the time, after my life, when only the tops of the mountains will be seen like islands in the waste of waters. ... Great actions and

successes must be achieved by the Catholic leaders, great wisdom as well as courage must be given them from on high, if Holy Church is to be kept safe from this awful calamity, and, though any trial which came upon her would but be temporary, it may be fierce in the extreme while it lasts.” (Letter from Jan. 6th, 1877).

The famous English Catholic poet and apologist Hilaire Belloc made the following apt and prophetic observation about the situation of the Catholic faith in the modern society of the 20th century, which is perfectly applicable to our 21st century: “Not a few profound observers (one in especial, a modern French-Jewish convert of the highest intellectual power) have proposed, as a probable tendency or goal to which we were moving, a world in which a small but intense body of the Faith should stand apart in an increasing flood of Paganism. I, for my part (it is but a personal opinion and worth little) believe, upon the whole, a Catholic increase to be the more likely; for, in spite of the time in which I live, I cannot believe that the Human Reason will permanently lose its power. Now the Faith is based upon Reason, and everywhere outside the Faith the decline of Reason is apparent. But if I be asked what sign we may look for to show that the advance of the Faith is at hand, I would answer by a word the modern world has forgotten: Persecution. When that shall once more be at work it will be morning.” (*Survivals and New Arrivals. The Old and New Enemies of the Catholic Church*, London 1929).

Cardinal Charles Journet said: To its smallest degree, the holiness of the Church will be made up of all that there is of faith, hope, holy words, generous acts, of authentic virtue even among her poorest children of the Church. The holiness of the Church is made above all by the holiness of the righteous from whom sinners hang, and first by the holiness of the true friends of God, and of the great saints, known or hidden. To these individual elements is added an ordering and unifying element. The breath of the Holy Spirit, sent by Christ on Pentecost, continues to animate the Church through all ages, conferring upon her a holiness whose breadth and continuity go beyond that of each of her members; so that the more holy they are, the more they themselves feel and proclaim that they are in the Church as disciples and not as masters. They are holy by Christ from whom everything comes to them and who is continued throughout the whole Church, and their holiness consequently by his root is common of the entire Church before being their own, so in essence it bears witness to the Catholic holiness of the Church and not properly to itself.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen said: “If I were not a Catholic, and were looking for the true Church in the world today, I would look for the one Church which did not get along well with the world; in other words, I would look for the Church which the world hates... Look for the Church that is hated by the

world, as Christ was hated by the world. Look for the Church which is accused of being behind the times, as Our Lord was accused of being ignorant and never having learned. Look for the Church which men sneer at as socially inferior, as they sneered at Our Lord because He came from Nazareth. Look for the Church which is accused of having a devil, as Our Lord was accused of being possessed by Beelzebub, the Prince of Devils. Look for the Church which, in seasons of bigotry, men say must be destroyed in the name of God as men crucified Christ and thought they had done a service to God. Look for the Church which the world rejects because it claims it is infallible, as Pilate rejected Christ because He called Himself the Truth. Look for the Church which is rejected by the world as Our Lord was rejected by men.” (Radio Replies, Vol. 1, p IX, Rumble & Carty, St. Paul, MN, 1942. Reprinted, Rockford, IL, Tan Books, 1979)

"What will become of the world, if the Church will not conserve the Spirit of God? The Church, however, will conserve this Spirit of God only on the condition that she combats the spirit, which is contrary to God. When the Church is attacked, she will defend herself: this is her right and her duty. What had been announced to her Divine Spouse, this is the history of the Church: "Rule in the midst of your enemies!" (Ps. 109:2). The Church is always a queen, but also always weak, her role on earth is to be militant. More than once, she seemed to be defeated. In this our time her exterior kingdom seems to decline. It was told to the Church through the prophets: "They will fight against you, yet they will not overcome you". (Is. 41:11). Yet the prophet of the last times, Saint John, has another language: "It was allowed to the beast to make war on the saints and to conquer them." (Rev. 13: 7). However, this victory of the last moment will be the prelude of a next defeat and of a definitive ruin. When you are condemned to see the triumph of the evil, you should never say to the evil: you are good; you should never say to the decadence: you are the progress; you should never say to the night: you are the light; you should never say to death: you are life. Sanctify yourselves in the time in which has God placed you; deplore the evils and the disorders, which God tolerates; oppose them with the energy of your works and of your efforts, your whole life keep pure from errors, free from evil works, so that after the life here on earth you will be one with the Spirit of the Lord, you will be admitted to be one with the Lord, for as Saint Paul said: "He who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1 Cor. 6: 17), (From the last sermon of Cardinal Pie, bishop of Poitiers, on the 18 of May 1880).

We possess an impressive text from the 3rd century, which makes an ardent appeal to remain always a good soldier of Christ: "Consider this fairly with me: When has Christ need of your aid? Now, when the wicked one has sworn war against His bride; or in the time to come, when He shall reign victorious, having no need of further help? Is it not evident to anyone who has even the least understanding, that it is now? Therefore, with all good-will hasten in the time of the present necessity

to do battle on the side of this good King, whose character it is to give great rewards after victory.”
(*Epistola Clementis ad Iacobum* 4).

Our weapons are the weapons of justice, and in the first place these weapons are prayer and a saintly life, the weapons of the spiritual help of the Holy Angels, the weapons of the sacred science, of the sacred apologetics, the weapons of righteous and honest individual and collective admonitions directed to those churchmen who in our day disfigure the Church the Bride of Christ with their ambiguous and even erroneous teaching and scandalous acts, which undermine the integrity of the Catholic Faith and the liturgy transmitted by the Apostles and the Saints.

Saint Fidelis, who was martyred by Protestants because of his uncompromising fidelity to the Catholic faith, a few days before he shed his blood to bear witness to his preaching, gave his last sermon. These are the words he left as a testament: “O Catholic faith, how solid, how strong you are! How deeply rooted, how firmly founded on a solid rock! Heaven and earth will pass away, but you can never pass away. From the beginning the whole world opposed you, but you mightily triumphed over everything. This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. It has subjected powerful kings to the rule of Christ; it has bound nations to his service. What made the holy apostles and martyrs endure fierce agony and bitter torments, except faith? What is it that today makes true followers of Christ cast luxuries aside, leave pleasures behind, and endure difficulties and pain? It is living faith that expresses itself through love. It is this that makes us put aside the goods of the present in the hope of future goods. It is because of faith that we exchange the present for the future.”