

THE CHAIR OF ST. PETER (2)
(The Rock on which Christ Founded His Church)
(J.F.M.H.- 6.2.2020)

The term 'Apostolic See' expresses an abstract idea of authority by use of the concrete name of the place in which it is exercised. It points to the permanency of the authority by drawing attention to the place rather than the person who holds the authority only during the time he is in office. 'An Apostolic See' is a See founded by an apostle, and having the authority of its founder. There were a number of Apostolic Sees, Jerusalem (See of St. James), Alexandria (See of St. Mark), Antioch (1st See of St. Peter), Rome (St. Peter transferred his See there), and others. 'The Apostolic See', sometimes called 'The Holy See', or 'The Chair of Peter' (Cathedra Petri) is the seat of authority in the Roman Catholic Church, containing the Apostolic functions of St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles. Hence the term 'Ex Cathedra' is used in the well-known definition of Papal infallibility. By the 4th Century, heresy and barbarian violence had swept away all of the particular Churches that could lay claim to an Apostolic See, until only Rome remained, thus term 'The Apostolic See' is now used as a proper name for the See of Rome. Today the names of the other Apostolic Sees, are still remembered, and, if you look on page 7 of "*Identification with the Sacred Host*", you will find a letter from the Patriarch of Antioch and for all Orient for Alexandria and for Jerusalem, giving his Apostolic benediction. Even before heresy and violence had done their work, Rome was already 'The Apostolic See' par excellence, and there is plenty of evidence to show this from the very earliest times. It was where the final authority lay.

February 22nd is the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter. St. Peter founded two more Sees, as he went from Jerusalem to Antioch where he is believed to have appointed its first bishop, St. Evodius, and then to Rome where he was martyred. He appointed at least three bishops in Rome; St. Linus (Pope No. 2), St. Cletus, (sometimes called Anacletus) (Pope No. 3) and St. Clement (Pope No. 4). The Daily Missal used to show two feasts of the Chair of St. Peter, one on January 18th called "The Chair of St. Peter in Rome", and the second on February 22nd, "The Chair of St. Peter in Antioch". Nowadays, we celebrate them in one feast day. The importance of the position of Peter in the Church has been extensively written about. In one of his sermons Pope St. Leo I, the Great, (440 - 461) explained the consequences of the way Christ founded the Church. *"One man, Peter, was chosen out of the whole world to preside over the calling of all nations, over all the apostles and all the fathers of the Church. So, although in the people of God there are many priests and many pastors, Peter was to rule by his own authority over all, and over them Christ continues to be the principle ruler. Brethren, by this appointment, God conferred on this man a great and wonderful share in his power, and where he willed that the rest of the leaders of the Church should have a gift like Peter's, it was only through Peter that he gave whatever he did not refuse to others."*

"The Lord once asked all the apostles what men thought about Him. So long as they were describing the uncertainties of ignorant men, they all said the same, but when he asked what the disciples, themselves, thought about him, it was the man who held first rank amongst the Apostles who was the first to confess the Lord. And when Peter had said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God", Jesus replied Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you, but my Father who is in Heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter (a name meaning rock) and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, I will give, to you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: Whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven." (Mat 16.13-19)

The right to this power was handed on to the other apostles as the provisions of this decree have been passed on to all the leaders of the Church. It was no idle gesture to put into one man's keeping, what was to be communicated to all. This commission was given to Peter in particular, because the example of Peter is put before all leaders of the Church. St. Peter was appointed by Christ the visible head of the Church on earth, and so became what we now call 'the Pope', Christ's Vicar on Earth.

St. Peter styling himself '*an apostle of Christ*' and writing to the Christians scattered throughout the Roman province of Asia Minor wrote on the theme, that being a Christian involves being isolated and persecuted, and that the patience required could only be learned from the example of Christ. It was in this the 1st letter of St. Peter that he mentions something very important to us as victim souls of substitution. He calls us (men and women) 'a holy priesthood', and then tells us that our role is the priestly one of offering up spiritual sacrifices to God by Jesus Christ. This is not to be understood that he was saying we were '*Ordained Ministerial Priests*'. "*Be you also as living*

stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2.5) We can see this made clear in the Eucharistic prayers of the Mass; "Look, we pray upon the oblation of your church and recognising the Sacrificial Victim whose death you willed to reconcile us to Yourself, grant that we who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with His Holy Spirit, may become one Body, in Christ. May He make of us an eternal offering to You, ..."

The Church, which is Christ's Mystical Body and also his Bride (Eph.5.25-27,C.C. C.796), continues to suffer the passions of Christ. You can read of these sufferings on pages 17-24 of *Identification with the Sacred Host*. They highlight those caused by dissident and sinful members of the Church itself, and in particular by disobedient yet consecrated souls whose ministry makes them participants in Christ's Eternal Priesthood. Our role is to make reparation for those sins. One might ask about such sins, what hope have we got of making any effective reparation? When we follow the precept of St. Paul to the Romans and offer our bodies, a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, we never act alone, but as members of the mystical body of Christ. Christ has not only an eternal priesthood, but also an eternal victimhood, and any reparation we offer, is made by the whole Christ, i.e. his head and members. With such a perfect offering to God (the Father Almighty), as the body of Christ, (His Son), the reparations will certainly be effective. As you can see, it follows the directions of the Chair of Peter that we should offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God the Father by Jesus Christ.

"The assent of faith is caused not by the intellect, but by the will." (St. Thomas Aquinas)

And St. Catherine of Siena writing about our efforts to get to heaven wrote, ***"All the way to Heaven is Heaven; for He has said 'I am the way'.*** (John 14.6)