

*Il nome del bel fior, ch'io sempre invocò
E m'incanta e sera.*

Her humility, her charity, her mercy, her loveliness inspire his mind and enflame his heart and make him burst forth in song rapturous in its sweetness, touching in its tenderness, unsurpassed in its childlike affection towards the Mother of God.

Buonconte dies with the name of Mary on his lips and he is saved. Mary's name re-echoes throughout the prison-house of Purgatory. *Maria ora pro nobis*—"For us, O Mary, pray," call out the souls. Her virtues are the contemplation of the holy souls. Her humility in the Annunciation is set before the proud to reflect upon. To those who knew no charity in this life blessed spirits are whispering the charitable lesson of Mary at the marriage feast—*vinum non habent*—her patience in the three days' loss is set before the wrathful, the slothful admire her task in the Visitation; the sensual her angelic, virginal purity.

Dolce Maria, sweet name of Mary, re-echoes throughout the circles of Purgatory:

By chance I heard amidst their wail who grieved
"Sweet Mary," right before us cried, as one
In pangs of travail cries to be relieved.

But if Alighieri has sung of Mary's virtues so attractively and feelingly in Purgatory, he has surpassed himself when singing of her glory in heaven. There Dante guided by St. Bernard, the Abbot of Clairvaux, is permitted to gaze upon the heavenly and smiling countenance of Mary who fills with joy indescribable the myriad of spirits who surround her, and whose effulgence dims the splendor of the other blessed inhabitants of heaven. Mary sits supreme in the heavenly session of the blessed with St. Peter and St. John the Evangelist on her right hand. On her left Adam and Moses, the holy women of the Old Testament, the Doctors and Fathers of the Church, and the children who although baptised have died before the use of reason, with their baptismal innocence untarnished.

St. Bernard recommends our poet to gaze intently into the countenance of Mary, the most like in splendor to that of her Divine Son, for her glory alone will render him capable of gazing without being dazed upon the divine effulgence of her Son:

Now look thou on the face which that of Christ
Resembles most, for in her aspect bright
Alone shalt thou find strength to gaze on Christ.

Then on her saw I showered such great delight
Ecstatic, which those holy beings bore
Created to fly, through that ample height,
That whatsoever I had seen before
So much of wonderful ne'er puzzled me,
Nor, to my view, of God such likeness wore.
That angel who descended formerly,
And sweetly sung—"Hail Mary, full of grace"
His wings outspread before her piously
The blessed court, from every several place
An answer made to that sweet song divine
So that still more serene became each face.

And now in the presence of Mary and the whole host of heaven, standing by his side, Dante puts upon the lips of St. Bernard the most beautiful hymn of praise and intercession that has yet been penned by any Christian writer, beseeching her—the heavenly Queen—to guard his protégé who is still of the living world and to save him from the allurements of his frail human nature:

*Vergine madre figlia del tuo Figlio
Umile ed alta più che creatura, etc.*

Such, ladies and gentlemen, are the sentiments, in brief, of Dante Alighieri on the doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church, sentiments different from those of devout Catholics to-day only in this that they are more ardent, more devout, more filial than those of many, and if in these readings of the poet the non-Catholic is able to descry or discover any indication of Dante's tendencies towards the new religion of the 16th century, he must in

truth be deemed a clever example of one who distorts words and sentences from their literal and obvious meaning. On the contrary if those who would claim him as a forerunner of the Reformation admit the natural interpretation of the passages quoted as they must and are pleased with them, "Let them," as Ozanam says, "speak in like manner and at this rallying word the south and north will exchange salutations; the doctors from London and Berlin will meet at the gates of Rome; the Vatican will enlarge its porticos for the accommodation of the reconciled generations and in the joy occasioned by a universal alliance, will be realised the prophecy inscribed on the obelisk of St. Peter's: *Xtus vincit, Xtus regnat, Xtus imperat*—Christ conquers, Christ reigns, Christ commands.

At the close of the lecture the Bishop called on Dr. Kelly to propose a vote of thanks. In a brief speech which laid emphasis on what Dante owed to Celtic inspiration, Dr. Kelly expressed his gratitude to Father Buckley for the admirable lecture which they had just heard, and said he was sure he was speaking for all present when he said it was a real intellectual treat of a kind that only comes our way too rarely.

The Bishop in seconding the vote of thanks referred to Dante's wonderful learning and to his central place in history, and above all to his Catholic spirit and his sound knowledge of theology. The worth of the poet was shown by the fact that after all those years the Pope sent out a special Encyclical inviting the whole world to join in doing honor to the great Florentine. His Lordship called upon the audience to pass the vote of thanks with unanimous applause.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL JUNIOR SEWING GUILD, DUNEDIN

The Dominican Nuns' pupils' St. Vincent de Paul Work Guild held their first meeting at St. Dominic's Priory on Friday afternoon, September 16, when the following office-bearers were elected:—Treasurer, Nancy Spiers; secretary, Mabel Dowdall; wardrobe-keeper, Gladys Nicholson. The work was commenced with great enthusiasm, and the young workers gave evidence of much earnestness and desire to be worthy of their motto—*Fide et labore*.

The second meeting was held the following week, when his Lordship the Bishop, Right Rev. Dr. Whyte (patron of the guild), and Very Rev. Father Coffey (chaplain) were present. His Lordship briefly addressed the girls, reminding them of the nobleness of the work they had undertaken, and of the high motives which should animate them in all their labors.

For the past two Sundays the members of the guild have, under the nuns' direction, conducted Christian Doctrine classes for the benefit of the children attending public schools in the city. They are assisted in this branch of the work by members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, who, in their work of visiting, come into touch with children in the instruction of whom these classes are of incalculable benefit. On both occasions the attendance has been satisfactory, there being a noticeable increase in numbers last Sunday.

DIOCESE OF CHRISTCHURCH

(From our own correspondent.)

September 26.

The Feast of St. Matthew, patronal feast of his Lordship Bishop Brodie, was observed at the Cathedral on Sunday. Appropriate hymns were sung by the school children during the early Mass, and all approached the Holy Table.

A mission, to be conducted by Rev. Fathers McCarthy, Herring, and O'Leary, Marist Missioners, will commence at the Cathedral on October 4. The first five days will be devoted to the children, and the mission for adults will open on Sunday, October 9.

Rev. Father Gallagher is at present doing duty at Ross, Westland, during the absence of Father Riordan on holiday leave.

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