

# *Saint Anthony Mary Claret and Vatican Council I*

«1870-1970»

Pope Pius IX, in a confidential conversation with the Dean of the Roman Rota, a Spanish Monsignor at that time, when the First Vatican Council was about to start, said: "Your nation's bishops will come to Rome. What a group of Bishops! How good they are! Specially Claret! He is a saint! We'll be not the one to canonize him, but somebody will do it later on."

This prophecy became a reality when Pope Pius XII proclaimed the Archbishop Claret a Saint on May 7, of the Jubilee Year 1950: the First Saint of the First Vatican Council.

It is a coincidence: two celebrations are going on this year: the first centennial of Vatican One, and also of the Death of Saint Anthony Mary Claret (1870-1970).

Making a combination of the two topics, I will offer here some ideas on the second as projected on the first.

Archbishop Claret, an exile in Paris with Queen Isabel II of Spain, left for Rome to attend the Sacerdotal Jubilee of Pope Pius IX, who invited him to remain there for the preparation of the already convoked Vatican Council.

He considered this work as the last act of service for the Church, and indeed it was a magnificent one: a fitting crown for a man who spent long years of dedicated faithful service, as an apostolic priest, then as a missionary Prelate, and finally as the leader of the church in Spain.

His presence in the Council — he faithfully attended all the general Sessions, and almost all the Congregations — clearly shows the interest of the ailing 62 years old Prelate for the work of the Council.

His signature can be seen attached to all the Documents, in the 40th. line among the 700 Fathers in attendance.

We are happy to read the news that the saintly Council Father Archbishop Claret signed heartily the following petitions, which later on would be matter of faith, or strongly recommended as such: papal infallibility, Assumption of Mary, Universal Patronage of St. Joseph, Ecumenism towards the Jews, and condemnation of usury... and promotion of other social programs, as well as the unification of the Catechism in Spain, and the reform of religious life.

However, he only took the floor one time to address the Fathers in one of the general Congregations, exactly, the 62nd. on May 31, 1970. Two days before, on May 29, he suffered an attack of apoplexy, which almost prevented him from delivering his discourse. The cause of the attack, according to him, was his personal reaction to the "mistakes, blasphemies, and heresies" uttered in the Council chamber by some Fathers, opposing the infallibility of the Pope. "My indignation and zeal were so great that I felt a very high blood pressure and suffered a cerebral commotion."

The third among the five speakers of that congregation, he spoke after the Archbishop of Utrecht, Holland, and the Patriarch of the Latin Rite of Jerusalem, and after him other two speakers, namely, the Archbishops of Cincinnati and of Halifax.

The Allocution of Archbishop Claret — according to one of the Fathers — "made a deep impression in all, and many of them will not forget in their lives the things he said, and the way he pronounced them." This was, perhaps, the only way to silence the opposition. He sounded truly as a Confessor of the faith, a witness, a martyr, bearing the scars of the suffering for Christ.

This is the text of the address:

"Everything has its own time: there is time for silence,  
there is time for talking

(Eccl. 3; 1, 7.)

Most Eminent Presidents,  
Most Eminent and Most Reverend Fathers:

I have kept silence until now in this sacred Council. But having heard one of these days (17th of the present month) certain words that I extremely dislike, my conscience compelled me to talk, afraid as I was of what Prophet Isaias said: 'Woe to me if I do not talk' (Isa. 6,5.)

And so, I will speak of the Supreme Pontiff and of his infallibility, according to the Scheme we have at hands.

And I say that, after reading the Holy Scriptures explained by the catholic Expositors; considering the never interrupted tradition, and after a deep meditation of the words of the Holy Fathers of the Church, of the Sacred Councils, and of the reasons of the theologians, that, for the sake of brevity, I will not mention.

I do say: that I am highly convinced and, led by this conviction, I assert that the Supreme Pontiff is infallible in that sense and way held by the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church.

That is my belief, and earnestly desire that this faith of mine be the faith of all. Let us not be afraid of these men who have no other criterion than the prudence of this world, a prudence truly inimical to God, a prudence with which Satan is transfigured into an Angel of light: that prudence is harmful to the authority of the holy Roman Church. (Cor. 11, 14) Finally I say that such a prudence is a helper of pride in those people who hate God: the pride, which, in the words of David, is constantly increasing. (Ps. 74,23)

I have no doubt at all, most eminent and Reverend Fathers, that the dogmatic declaration of the Infallibility of the Supreme Pontiff of Rome will be the winnowing-shovel with which Our Lord Jesus Christ will thresh-out his grain and gather the wheat into his barn, and burn the chaff in a fire that never goes out. (Luke 3, 17) This declaration will separate light from darkness (Gen. 1,4.)

Oh, if I could, in the confession of this truth, shed all my blood and suffer unto death!

Oh, if I could consummate the sacrifice started in the year 1856 when I was coming down from the pulpit, after preaching the faith and christian morals, on February 1st., vigil of the Purification of Our Lady, the Most Holy Mary. I bear the scars of Our Lord Jesus Christ in my body (Gal. 5, 17), as you see in my face and arm.

Oh, if I could finish my life professing and saying in the abundance of my heart this great truth: I believe that the Supreme Pontiff is infallible!

I earnestly desire, most eminent and reverend Fathers, that all of us acknowledge and profess this truth. In the life of St. Therese we read that Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to her, and said: 'My daughter, all the evils of this world come from the people who do not understand the Holy Scriptures.'

Truly, if men understand the Sacred Scriptures, they would see clear and openly this truth, that the Supreme Pontiff of Rome is infallible, because that truth is contained in the Sacred Scriptures.

But, what is the cause of not understanding the Scriptures? Three are the causes:

1. Because men do not love God, as the same Jesus said to St. Therese.
2. Because they are not humble, as it is stated in the Gospel. "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I thank You because you have shown to the unlearned what you have hidden to the wise and learned." (Luke 10, 21.)
3. Finally, because there are some who do not like to understand the Holy Scriptures, so that they would not be obliged to do good works.

Let us say, therefore, as David:

May the Lord have mercy on us,  
and bless us.

Shine His face upon us,  
and have mercy on us.

(Psalm 67, 2.)

## I SAID."

His ardent desire was satisfied one month and a half later, on July 18, when all the 535 Fathers, except two, gathered for the 4th. General Session, approved the Scheme, which the Pope immediately confirmed with his supreme authority.

In his own words, the Saint recalls this happy event, in his Autobiography:

In the Sacred Vatican Council.  
On the 18th. day of July, 1870.  
The Infallibility of the Roman Pontiff when he speaks  
ex cathedra has been defined.!

This truth has been always believed in the Apostolic Roman Church, and always has been taught in the Schools of sound theology; but because Satan has raised so many errors and deceits, the Supreme Pontiff, with the opinion of the Fathers of the Sacred Vatican Council, has been pleased to declare and define this great truth, and place it as a beaconlight, so that the faithful that sail through the perilous sea of this world may know where the port of truth and virtue is, and may avoid the obstacles of error and vice

The Decree ends with the following precise and fulminating words:

"If anyone — God forbids — dare to contradict this our definition, — be excommunicated!"

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As a conclusion of the preceding article, here is the sketch of the Life of St. Anthony Mary Claret.

Born on Christmas Eve, 1807, in Sallent, Barcelona, Spain, Antonio Claret y Clará spent his childhood and adolescence helping in the small textile mill of his parents.

At 18 he was enrolled in one of the best schools for Arts and Trades, in Barcelona. There he acquired the latest methods of the weaving industry, which he applied successfully in the plant of his father, making it progress considerably.

At 21 he started to feel strongly, and to follow, the vocation to priesthood, to which he was ordained on June 13, 1835. He was 28 years old.

Finding his apostolic work inadequate to cover the many needs of so many people, he founded the Congregation of Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CMF), on July 16, 1849. (This group of religious missionary men are called today, by the Founder's name: CLARETIANS.)

One month later, he was appointed and consecrated Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, where he spent his best years as a missionary Prelate, until Queen Isabel II of Spain called him to the royal court of Madrid, in 1856, to become her spiritual adviser and Confessor. This job he combined with many others for the welfare of the Catholic Church all over Spain.

The Spanish Revolution of the year 1868 obliged him to flee with the royal family, from Spain to France. He continued his trip to Rome, where he took part in the preparations of the First Vatican Council, as we have seen in the previous article.

Stricken by apoplexy, and exhausted by the heavy climate of the eternal City, he was brought back to France, as a refugee, in the southern town of Prades, (by that time, there was a flourishing Community of Claretians — refugees too from Spain). There he stayed enjoying the family life of his brothers as religious, until the notice arrived that he was being persecuted by the revolutionaries. Secretly he went to the neighboring Monastery of Fontfroide, on August 6. Two months later the attack was repeated, of which he never recovered.

It was October 24, 1870: exactly 62 years and ten months since his birth.

On February 25, 1934 he was beatified by Pope Pius XI, and on May 7, 1950 — the Holy Year — he reached the supreme honor of the altars, as decreed by Pope Pius XII, a place he actually maintains, in spite of the many "drop-outs" of the calendar of the Saints.