

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE BULL OF CANONIZATION OF GREGORY IX

TEXT

To the Archbishops and Bishops, Abbots, Priors, Archdeacons, Archpriests, and Other Prelates of Churches Who receive This Letter

The Font of Wisdom, the Word of the Father [Eccli. 1:5], Our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose nature is goodness and Whose work is mercy, redeems and renews those whom He created. He does not abandon the vine which He transplanted from Egypt [Ps. 79:9] even unto the very consummation of the world [Matt. 28:20], and wisely produces anew signs for unstable minds and works miracles against the diffidence of disbelief. Thus at the beginning of the nascent Church, after the death of Moses, that is to say, the end of the [Old] Law [Romans 10:4], He was about to mount the four-horse chariot of the Gospels, which are the true [sources of] salvation, and to tramp under foot the presumption of Jericho, the [vain] glory of the world; to the stupefaction of nations, He had conquered [this presumption] by the strong sound of His preaching and by taking hold of the ark of the sacred word, which He tightened until He reduced the Jew to impotency [Ps. 57:8]. So, renewing the oaths which He had made for us in the person of our fathers, He made a path in the sea for His horses and prefigured the salvation of innumerable nations by Raab's scarlet-cord signal [Josue 2:18-21].

In the first of the four chariots which, in the prophet Zacharias, came out from the midst of two brass mountains, He harnessed red horses [Zacharias 6:1-2], [that is] the princes of peoples and the powerful men of the earth. Adhering, through the obedience of the faith to the God of Abraham, the father of believers [Romans 4:11], after the example of their leader, and with a view to strengthening the bases of the alliance, these men dyed their clothes in Bosra [Isaias 63:1], that is, the anguish of tribulation, and reddened the insignia of their welfare. Without fear of the sword of this world [and with a view to] the joy of future glory, they became martyrs, that is, witnesses, and, by their confession, they undersigned the book of the new land; and yet, by the public manifestation of their miracles, they fortified the work upon which they were especially intent. They dyed the book and the tabernacle, made by God, not man, as well as the vessels of the ministry of the Gospel with the blood, not of brute animals, but of rational victims. Finally casting the net of preaching over the vast extent of the sea [Habacuc 1:17], they built up the church, thus greatly increased in number, from all nations which are under heaven.

But, because presumption closely took hold of the multitude and malice closely followed upon freedom, [Our Lord] sent in the second chariot, under the color befitting those who weep and do penance [Zacharias 6:12], a whole squadron of knights, who were led to the desert of the cloister by the Spirit, under the leadership of a new Israel, the very holy Benedict. As though under another Eliseus, these sons of the prophets [IV Kings 2:3] reestablished, in the pleasing society of blessed cohabitation, that good of the common life which had been lost because of an excessive number of persons [in previous communities]. Thereby they repaired the broken net of

unity and, penetrating by their works of piety into the territory of the north whence every evil arises [Jeremias 1:14], they caused Him, Who refuses to dwell in a body subject to sins [Wisdom 1:4] to take His rest in those who enter into the storehouses of the snow [Job 38:22] and are contrite of heart [Isaias 61:1].

After these men, [Our Lord], as though seeking to refresh His weary army and make it joyful after sorrow, harnessed to the third chariot [Zacharias 6:3] the white horses, [namely], the brethren of the Order of Citeaux and More, whom, like a tonsured flock rich in the fruits of charity, He caused to come forth from the bath of penance with St. Bernard, the ram of the flock, who was clothed from on high with the power of the Spirit and went before them into the abundant grain of the valleys, so that, becoming free through him [i.e. Bernard], they might strongly call out to the Lord, sing the hymn [of gratitude], and establish the camps of the God of hosts upon the sea [Genesis 32:2]. With these troops in three armies, the new Israel could challenge number by number the troops which the Philistines had organized [I Kings 13:17].

But at the eleventh hour, when the day was giving way to evening and the charity of many was growing cold because of the abundance of iniquity [Matt. 24:12], and the rays of the sun of justice, too, were turning toward the west; when not only had the brambles and thorns of vice invaded the vineyard (into which the father of the family at various times sent workmen hired at the agreed salary of a denarius) [Matt. 20:2] and which He had planted with His right hand [Ps. 79:16], but also little foxes, destroying it, were seeking to change it into the bitterness of a strange vine [Cant. 2:15], He wanted to organize more mobile militia against this most hostile multitude. Thus, as we see now, after the appearance of the first three chariots represented by various symbols, [God] has had the fourth chariot come forth, drawn by grisled and strong horses [Zacharias 6:3], the legions of the Friars Preachers and Friars Minor, with the generals He had selected to lead them together in battle. [God it is Who] aroused the spirit of St. Dominic and gave him, as to the horse of His glory, the strength of faith and the fervor of divine preaching, clothing his neck with neighing [Job 39:19].

Possessing from childhood the heart of a mature man and choosing to live in the mortification of the flesh, he sought the author of life. Given to God as a Nazarean [Judges 16:17] and consecrated under the rule of the blessed Augustine, he imitated Samuel in the assiduous service of the sanctuary [I Kings 3:1] and continued the very pious aspirations of Daniel in the castigation of his desires [Daniel 10:11]. As a fearless athlete, he sedulously pursued the paths of justice [Ps. 22:3] and the way of the Saints. And not leaving the tabernacle of the Lord even for a moment, he did not abandon his role as teacher and minister in the militant church. Subjecting his flesh to his spirit and his sensitivity to reason, he became one and the same spirit with God [I Cor. 6:17], and completely devoted his attention to seeking Him through the excess of his mind [Ps. 30:23]. Moreover, in the eagerness of his companions, he never departed from love for his neighbor. When he destroyed the pleasures of the flesh and illuminated the stony minds of the impious, the whole sect of the heretics trembled and the whole Church of the faithful rejoiced.

Yet grace increased with age [Luke 2:52] and, drawing from his intense love of souls inexplicable joy, he dedicated himself to spreading God's word by becoming, through Christ's Gospel, the father of many children [I Cor. 4:15] in the conversion of a multitude once so

disorderly, who now acknowledge the obligations of their Christian dignity. He has deserved to attain upon earth the glory and achievement of the great patriarchs of the past. Made a pastor and illustrious leader among the people of God, he founded the new Order of Preachers by his holy labors, adorned it by his exemplary life, and has not ceased to support it by manifest and authentic miracles. For, among the works of holiness and the signs of virtue with which he shone during his mortal life, he cured a great variety of infirmities: he gave speech to mutes, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf [Mark 7:37], footsteps to paralytics, and restored former health to persons suffering many kinds of sicknesses. Whence it is clear as to which Spirit dwelt in the members of his very holy body.

Thanks to the deep friendship he had for us when we were fulfilling a more modest office, we had proof of his sanctity in the admirable testimony of his life; and now competent witnesses have given us a full certification about the real character of the miracles about which many have spoken. Moreover, in union with the Lord's flock given to our care, we are confident that, by God's mercy, we can be aided by his suffrages, and that we who merited to enjoy the consolation of his very gracious friendship here on earth, may now have the benefit of his powerful patronage in heaven.

With the advice and consent of our brethren [the cardinals], as well as of all the prelates who were then close at the Apostolic See, we have resolved to inscribe him in the catalogue of the Saints, establishing firmly and commanding all of you, in virtue of this letter, solemnly to celebrate and have celebrated his birth into heaven, on the nones of August, the vigil of the day when, putting aside the burden of the flesh and rich in merits, he entered into heaven, having become like the Saints in glory. May God, Whom he honored during his life, be moved by his prayers to grant us grace in this world and glory in the world to come.

Finally, desiring that the venerable tomb of such a great confessor, who illustrates the whole Church by striking miracles, be worthily visited and honored in keeping with Christian piety, and trusting in the mercy of the All-powerful God, as well as in the authority of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, we mercifully grant the remission of one year of penance, once a year, to all the faithful who, having gone to confession with a true spirit of penance, visit [this tomb] on his feast day, with befitting devotion and respect.

Given at Rieti, the Fifth of the Nones of July, the Eighth Year of Our Pontificate.