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Symposium on Spirituality

Papers on Scalabrinian Spirituality

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Contents

-Pág. 3-

First chapter (Vatican 1)

Of the Institution of the Apostolic Primacy in Blessed Peter

2

-Pág. 8-

Chapter Two. (81-106)

*Of the Perpetuity of the Primacy of
Blessed Peter in the Roman Pontiffs*

Of the Institution of the Apostolic Primacy in Blessed Peter

The eternal Pastor and Bishop of our souls **decreed to build the Holy Church** in which, as in the house of the living God, all the faithful would remain united in the bond of one faith and charity. Since therefore he called the Apostles whom he had chosen for himself from the world, as he had been sent to it by the Father, **so he wanted that in his church there were pastors and teachers until the consummation of the world.**

He placed blessed Peter before the other apostles, instituted in him the perpetual principle and the visible foundation on whose fortress the eternal temple and the sublimity of the church arose.

Therefore, we judge it necessary, by approving this sacred council, to propose the doctrine to be believed and held by all the faithful according to the ancient and constant faith of the universal church, concerning the **institution, perpetuity** and **nature** of the sacred apostolic primacy.

3

NEED OF A VISIBLE VICAR

The first topic that I propose to you of the sacred council is: The Institution of the Apostolic Primacy of Blessed Peter.

Jesus Christ is the true and proper monarch of the Catholic Church, who invisibly rules and governs and is the shepherd and bishop of all our souls; the only teacher the Father commands us to listen to; he alone who baptizes in the Holy Spirit and, as long as he lived among men, the exclusive center of the twofold unity of his spouse: the unity of the spirit and the unity of the body.

The Savior wanted to give the church a permanent and perpetual monarchical constitution, which would last until the end of time. For this purpose, while he was about to ascend to take possession of his glory, making himself invisible, it was necessary that he **designate that one who**, ineffably enriched by his sovereign power, **would visibly take his place** among men, gather the sons of God, who were scattered, in his name he taught them, sanctified them with those gifts of his grace.

To PETER ALONE

Our Savior provided for this need with the institution of the **apostolic primacy in the person of Blessed Peter**, when he spoke these solemn words: "Blessed are you, Simone Bariona, because flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but My Father, who is in heaven. And I say to you that you are Peter and that upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not be able against it; to you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever you bind upon the earth shall also be bound in heaven: whatever you lose upon the earth shall be loosed also in heaven". And to Simon Peter **alone** after the resurrection Jesus conferred the jurisdiction of supreme shepherd and ruler above all his fold saying: "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep".

JESUS CHANGES THE NAME

In many places when God speaks, he changes the name of the chosen one. He changes Abraham's name; he talks to Jacob after the mysterious fight saying: "Your name will not be Jacob, but Israel". To Peter he says: "You are Simon, the son of Jonah, you will be called Cephas", which is interpreted as stone.

In many places in the Gospel, **Jesus refers to Peter as the leader and confident of the most sublime teachings**; so that the name of the future head of the church is often repeated by himself, surrounded by veneration and profound respect, an undoubted sign of his future greatness. **To Peter Jesus will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven** in order to loose and bind as he deems fit. The promise of a future primacy of authority and jurisdiction over the whole church could not be expressed more vividly.

Peter will be to the Church what **the foundation** is to the building, **the head** to the body, the moderator to the city, **the king** and to the kingdom, **the father** and to the family. St. Basil wrote: "Peter for the excellence of his faith, received in himself the edification of His church". "And the Lord, adds Epiphanius, made Peter an immovable stone on which the church of God was built".

By virtue of the keys, Peter is the first confessor of the son of God, the foundation of the church, the gatekeeper of the celestial kingdom, and in times and earthly judgments the judge of heaven.

Close to ascending to heaven, the Savior really conferred upon him that supreme authority, sovereign dignity, with all the graces, the charisms that accompany it with those divine commands: "**Feed my Lambs; Feed my sheep.**" The incarnate word, in which all the treasures of wisdom and science were hidden, thus **transfused into the prince of the apostles**, by means of the Holy Spirit, all his communicable prerogatives and thereby **made him his vicar** on earth; Peter became the head, guide and source of doctrine and justification to the apostles.

At the death of each Pope, **Jesus Christ takes back the sovereign power of his church**, not as men had pretended to temper it, **but as he instituted it, to invest with it the new pontiff and with all the rights granted to Peter himself**. In fact, **it is Peter**, who rises in the upper room and proposes the choice of one who has the office of traitor Judas; **Peter is** the first to preach in the city; **it is Peter** who is the first to open the doors of the church to the Gentiles; **it is Peter** who gathers, presides, confirms the council of Jerusalem; **it is Peter** who punishes the fraud of Ananias and Sapphira, the first to rob the sacred goods; **it is Peter** who goes on a visit to the churches, who walks through the ranks of his army; **it is Peter** who approves the writings of his dearest brother Paul, who, although he had received the Gospel through the immediate revelation of Jesus Christ, as if to put the external seal of his legitimacy on his mission, goes to Jerusalem to visit **Peter**.

OBJECTIONS

To this so clear doctrine of the sacred scriptures are opposed the evil judgments of those who, perverting the form of government established by our Lord Jesus Christ in his church, **deny that only Peter was endowed by Christ with the true and proper primacy of jurisdiction in preference to the other apostles**, but they affirm that the same primacy was conferred not immediately and directly on blessed Peter himself, **but on the church and that through this, also on him, as a minister of the same church**. And the Pope and the bishops exercise her powers; they govern it freely by virtue of their mission; God has given them the freedom to preach, to write, to issue decrees, to update themselves, to govern the Church.

The church established as a kingdom cannot be changed without being destroyed, without replacing the divine work of Christ with a human work.

The greatest glory of the Roman Pontificate, in the ongoing war for so many centuries waged for the freedom of the Church, was to **keep intact the monarchic flag, which Christ placed in his hand**.

The sacred council, therefore, with an immortal power, **solemnly condemned the errors**

1. **of Luther and Calvin and of all the Protestant sects**, which deny the sovereign supremacy of Peter over the other apostles;
2. over the church of **the Greeks and Russians**, who support the pretensions of the see of Constantinople and the wavering authority of a supposedly holy synod;
3. of those who at the end of the 17th century wanted to equal Peter and Paul by preaching them both equally supreme pastors.
4. He condemned France, the doctrine of Marsilius of Padua, of Richard, mayor of the theological faculty of Paris, who denied the **monarchical form of the Church**, taught to be the Savior's words addressed to her, denying that He delegated to Peter as his representative;

5. the erroneous opinions of Van-Espen, Febronius, the synod of Pistoia and **all the Jansenists**; the various gradations of **Gallicanism**, which for so long tarnished the most noble church of France, that through a happy inconsistency was able to show every day lively and ardent affectionate veneration for the vicar of Jesus Christ.

Saint Ambrose said: "**In the faith and in the name of Peter the Church is consecrated**" of which by divine institution She is the visible head, the center of its twofold unity, and the unshakable foundation, immediately and directly clothed with the royal dignity and graces and prerogatives associated with it.

The hand of God is visible, because, precisely on the eve of the atrocious war, which was to move against the divine organism of the **Church and the authority of its head, wanted to validate both with "The Dogmatic Constitution first around to the church of Christ"** published by the Vatican Council. It was a great good that the command of the Supreme Duce was established, and health of the Christian peoples.

Just **as** the subversive indications of authority, which prevailed at the time of the Council of Basel, marked the beginning of the great political-religious revolution of modern times, **so** the remedial affirmation of all the prerogatives of the pontificate will mark the principle of a restoration of all the private and public orders of Christendom.

When Attila, the scourge of God, set fire to the lands of the ancient Roman Empire, and threatened the extreme massacre of the Christian world, Peter's successor tamed him and **religion and society were saved**. The revolution, which is increasingly raging in its aberrations, minister of heavenly indignation, armed with torches and petroleum to punish the rulers and the ruled, shatters before Peter's successor, **Pius IX**, who in his indomitable firmness, with arcane virtue of his word, **is the only support of the dying society**.

Blessed **Christ**, Son of almighty God, who was given all authority on earth, **who stands guard over the seat of Peter**; who watches lovingly and by his solicitude surrounding her, cannot allow her to be long a victim of the snares of the infernal gates, which to the extent of the tribulations, with which her enemies fill her, increases her Glory, splendor, influence, health of all, to complete that work of restoration and moral and material renewal, to which society aspires, and **which can only come from the successor of Peter**.

Blessed therefore our Lord Jesus Christ who, in establishing the apostolic primacy of his Church, wanted that the Catholic breath should depart from him at all times, that it should spread throughout the world to verify the now corrupt and gangrenous society, that He wanted sole guardian, depositary faithful, savior of peoples, upholder of the reigns of all authority, infallible preacher of the true Religion.

PETER, therefore, and only Peter can speak words of truth, of life, of health, to families, to nations, to subjects, to kings, to emperors, to everyone; let us cling to Him with unshakeable firmness.

CLOSURE

O Como, o noble city of the Lario, the nurse of strong souls and disdainful of injustice and cowardice, I remind you of the glorious names of Paul II, Sixtus IV, of Innocent VIII, of Leo X, of Julius II so well deserving of your institutes of charity, of your Ospedale Maggiore, of your monuments so admired; I remind you that the banner that Peter raises, is the banner of God; there your children will find blessings from heaven and the ineffable gifts of the Holy Keys; there they will find the bond of charity, which binds them to Christ, to God, in whom they will be eternally blessed in the best homeland that awaits them.



Of the Perpetuity of the Primacy of Blessed Peter in the Roman Pontiffs

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS A MONARCHY

The true Church of Jesus Christ, called in the Scriptures, the new Jerusalem, which came down from heaven, because - explains St. Gregory, - it was instituted and conformed in its divine constitution to the Church of the immortal Angels, which is the example and almost the model of the Church of mortal men, **was always governed in its various phases and ages, in the manner of a monarchy.**

Departing from the throne of God and appearing on earth with the human race, the Church **recognized and venerated her supreme head in each of the patriarchs**, right from Aaron and the pontiffs of the first covenant, who continued their sublime functions up to Jesus Christ, who became flesh, to give her the promised redemption.

He himself confirms that **organic form** with which it had persisted since the beginning of the world, conferring on Peter that authority which He possesses, and **remaining primary foundation and invisible head, he constituted him secondary foundation and visible head**, with all His strength and His power; confided to him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, the power to loose and bind until the end of time.

PETER DIES, BUT HIS AUTHORITY IS PERPETUAL

But Peter, like every other man, had to fulfill his **mortal** career; **his power** was never to fail, but to be **transmitted in perpetuity to his legitimate successors**; since 'people who hold authority die, but **the universal supremacy of dignity and jurisdiction cannot die**, established by Christ for the good of his Church.

The Church renders in herself the most perfect image of her Founder. *In the way* in which her celestial spouse, in the unity of his person, uniting the human and the divine nature lives on the life of both and made use of both for the redemption of man, *so the Church* lives on **a divine life**, since it is united and invisibly presided over by Jesus Christ, but it also lives an **external life**, insofar as it is visibly presided over by a vicar of Him.

The perpetual institution of the primacy of Peter therefore **enters as an essential element in the normal constitution of the Church**. And it is a dogma of faith that the Roman Pontiff succeeds him (Peter) by divine right, in the same primacy in the whole Church, with the same sovereign prerogatives as he. (Peter).

In this chapter the subject of the reflections is the following: *Of the perpetuity of the primacy of Blessed Peter in the Roman Pontiffs*.

(85) **What** the prince of shepherds, our Lord Jesus Christ, **instituted** in the blessed Apostle Peter for the perpetual health and perennial advantage of the Church, by the power of the same divine instructor **it is necessary that it endure perennially in the Church**, which, founded upon the stone, it will stand still until the end of time.

Peter did not receive from Christ in the Primacy a personal privilege, which was to end in him and with him, but such a privilege, which constituted and preserved the unity of his church, was **to last as much as she herself** and therefore the foundation, origin, divine title of the Supreme authority of his successors.

The Kingdom of God, upon the earth, established for eternity, will never end; the covenant that the Son of the Lord makes with men, - sings Isaiah, - is perpetual and their seed will be known by the nations and will flourish among the peoples.

Now, if the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, which is the Church, is perpetual, **perpetual must also be the foundation on which it is raised**, *perpetual God's immediate instrument* to make it invincible, and to break all the enemy designs and forces, **which is Peter**. It *perpetuates the faith* upon which the edifice of Jesus Christ was built, which is the faith of Peter; *perpetual* the glorious prerogatives conferred by the Savior on Peter, which form him the true monarch of that Imperishable Kingdom. Jesus Christ would have provided **little** for the good of the Church, if the magnificent things promised, and conferred on Peter, **had to cease at his death**.

9

EXTRAORDINARY FACULTIES OF THE FIRST APOSTLES

Indeed, **all the apostles** possessed the fullness of the priesthood; they all had the right to preach, to found, to govern churches throughout the universe, **and they all had individually, the gift of infallibility**. These sublime prerogatives, promised and bestowed upon them by the Savior, **were absolutely necessary in the extraordinary condition in which the nascent Church** found itself. And with her all the apostles, who, having the whole earth assigned as a field for their labors, had to separate without hope of seeing each other again, or at least, if not with difficulty, their supreme leader. **This authority of the apostles was transitory**, while it had no other purpose than the *Foundation of the Church*, **and should not pass to their successors**, the bishops, heirs of the ordinary faculties alone, **without annulling the juridical primacy of Peter**, each of them being animated and governed by the Holy Spirit.

It follows therefore evidently, that, more than in apostolic times, the strength of the primacy was necessary thereafter, and that therefore, when **Jesus Christ changed the name** of Simon to that of Peter, assuring him that the efforts of the enemy powers would not overwhelm him; when He **commissioned him to confirm his brothers** in the faith and hired him to **shepherd sheep and lambs**, He wanted to found a Supreme, Perpetual and Transmissible Authority in order to forever maintain the unity of faith and communion in His Church.

What must serve as a support for an eternal Church, it can never end. Peter will live in the successors; Peter will always speak from his chair: This is what the fathers say and what 630 bishops confirm in the Council of Chalcedon.

(89) **The other apostles**, in fact, completed their mortal career after having founded the many sees, and **none claimed the fullness of the apostolic dignity**. They left successors in the episcopate, but not in the extraordinary office personally conferred on them and ceased with them. But the seat of Peter is the apostolic seat par excellence, perpetually necessary to the Church, the visible center of the Catholic world, which identifies (unites) **both, the particular episcopate of the diocese of Rome, and the universal primacy of the whole Church**.

I know that in our day there were men, so madly daring and impious, who, boasting of old subtleties triumphantly repeated a thousand times, dared to challenge the most eloquent monuments and the most lively of traditions to the face, with the coming of the Apostle Peter in eternal city; but thanks to the defenses made, **the Catholic sentiment**, that has lasted deep for nineteen centuries, **was adorned with new glory and the most magnificent splendor**.

10

Everything in Rome speaks of Peter, who founded that see, was its bishop for twenty-five years, died there on a crucifix, leaving his dignity, his authority, his blood and his venerated ashes to the Roman Church.

CRITICISM AND EVIDENCE

The even more severe criticism admits as an **indisputable axiom**, that when a fact is unanimously attested by contemporary authors, who had no interest in deceiving, **such a fact must be regarded as absolutely certain**. And this is the first principle of critical science; it is therefore necessary to admit such a principle, or nothing more, even if it is a matter of the existence of the Roman Empire, of the discovery of America made by the pious Genoese Christopher Columbus, or the famous victories of Napoleon.

It would take a very long time to cite even the most beautiful, clear and unattainable testimonies of sacred antiquity about the coming, episcopate and death of Peter in Rome. Read Clement, Ignatius Irenaeus, Gaius, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Ambrose, Jerome, Paul Orosius, Optatus, Epiphanius and John Chrysostom. Review those fathers who handed down to us the catalog of Roman bishops. Think of San Marco, they call him the interpreter of Saint Peter and almost his secretary in Rome; his blessed ashes, buried in the Vat-

ican. Everyone remembers the Roman see as a public thing, founded by Peter and consecrated by his blood.

The deception was not easy: the arrival of the apostle in Rome, his episcopate, his death, is a very simple fact, but of such importance, that it is linked with the whole system of Christian civilization, which made the Catholic world subject to the bishop of Rome, whom the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem themselves always welcomed with complete submission, without the slightest opposition to his decisions and decrees in matters of faith, morals and discipline, in the certainty that he was the heir of Peter, who died in Rome and bishop of Rome.

Therefore, whoever succeeds Peter in this chair, he, according to the institution of Christ himself, obtains the primacy of Peter over the whole universal Church. For this reason, it was always necessary that with the Roman Church, due to the pre-eminent principality, the whole Church should agree, that is to say, **all the faithful of the world**, so that in that seat, from which all the rights of the venerable communion derive, as members united in their head, they **came to unite and consolidate in a single body**.

The Roman Pontiff therefore succeeds Peter in the primacy of the universal Church, not because Rome was the metropolis of the world, **but by the will of Christ himself**, i.e. by divine right. **The Roman bishop will always be the head of the universal Church; the head of the universal Church will always be the bishop of Rome.**

11

The Church is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, invisible monarch; it is the Kingdom of the Pope, the visible monarch, **who was given the keys not of this or that church, but of the whole world**. Rome, which has become the seat of the spiritual sovereignty of the whole universe, is the holy city, the Royal Palace of the Pontiff, indeed of Christ, whose place the Pontiffs hold here below and in whose name he rules, governs the Church, which embodies, in itself, the grand concept of universal empire.

The Church inherited the character of universality of the Empire of Rome, or rather, according to the noble thought of the angelic doctor, **the temporal empire of Rome has been converted into a spiritual one**. That, therefore, which St. Peter either by express command of the Savior, as some theologians opine, or by his own deliberation and will as Vicar of Jesus **Christ**, as others think, **joined together cannot be separated**. Neither by decree of a general council, nor by the fact of all peoples, **the supreme pontificate cannot be transferred from the Roman bishop or from the city of Rome to another bishop or to another city**.

*"If therefore someone will say not to be of institution of Christ the Lord Himself, that it is of divine reason, **that Blessed Peter has the primacy over the universal Church**, perpetual successors; or that the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of Blessed Peter in the same primacy, let him be anathema".*

Another certain rule to know the true bride of the Savior, given to us by the

great archbishop of Milan Sant' Ambrogio, and derived from the perpetuity of the apostolic primacy is: "**Where Peter is, there is the church; There is not death, but eternal life**".

I look around the world and find the Greek schismatic Church, which prides itself on being the true bride of Christ; *but Peter is not there*, therefore there is neither the church nor eternal life, but death.

I see the churches of Luther, of Calvin, of Henry the Eighth, of Zuinglius, of the Waldensians, of the Evangelicals, of the Methodists and of other sects that try to steal the unity of faith from our Italy; I see them, *but without Peter*; they therefore are not the bride of Jesus Christ, who saves souls, but they are adulteresses, repudiated, who lead not to life but to eternal death.

I see the Eastern Christian sects, still existing, but stripped of the ancient veneration of the successor of Peter, which they no longer recognize, whose foundation they no longer accept, as God's vicar, none is therefore part of the great living body of the true Church.

However, I contemplate on earth an immense society of brothers, the most glorious, the most powerful, whose animating principle is Christ the Lord Himself, who forms a single person with Him, who venerates in the bishop of Rome, Peter, who lives and governs, Peter foundation, chief shepherd, master, vicar of Jesus Christ and **here you are, I exclaim, here you are , gentlemen, the true church of Jesus Christ**, which cannot adulterate, Cyprian would say, which is incorrupt and chaste, which knows only one mansion and preserves with chaste modesty the sanctity of a single bed.

Whoever separates himself from the Church and joins the adulteress is also separated from the promises of the Church. **Whoever abandons** the Church of Christ

