

## Leo XIII and the 100 years

2003 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Gioacchino Pecci, Pope Leo XIII. He came to the papal throne on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1878, a few days short of his 68<sup>th</sup> birthday, and died on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1903 at the age of 93.

His predecessor, Pius IX, had reigned for more than 31 years, in one of the longest pontificates ever, and it is thought that the chief motive of the Cardinals who elected the aging Cardinal Pecci to the pontifical throne was to avoid another long pontificate. They were to be disappointed.

Leo was one of the great statesmen of the Church. He re-established the prestige of the Holy See in all countries, saw the end of the Kultur-kampf in Germany, and advised French Catholics to rally to the Republic. His prestige and influence led to a great spread of the Catholic Church in America. In encyclicals which are models of classical style, clarity of statement and convincing logic, he treated of the most serious questions affecting modern society. Among them are *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae* (1880) on Christian marriage; *Diuturnum Illud* (1881) on the origin of civil power; *Immortale Dei* (1885) on the Christian constitution of states; *Sapientiae Christianae* (1890) on the duties of the Christian as a citizen; *Libertas* (1888) on the real meaning of liberty; *Humanum Genus* (1884) on the evils of Freemasonry; and *Rerum Novarum* (1891), his most famous encyclical, on the condition of the working classes. His encyclicals on Catholic doctrine and morals include *Aeterni Patris* (1880) on the restoration of Christian philosophy, especially that of St Thomas Aquinas; *Providentissimus Deus* (1893) on biblical studies; and *Tametsi Futura Prospicientibus* (1900) on Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. In 1896 he issued the Bull *Apostolicae Curae*, pronouncing against the validity of Anglican orders.

It is said that after he had celebrated Mass in the presence of some Cardinals and members of the Vatican staff on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1884, Pope Leo experienced a vision of the future concerning the Church in which the power of Satan would be unleashed for a period of 100 years. He was so shaken by the spectre of the destruction of moral and spiritual values both inside and outside the Church that he composed a prayer to St Michael the Archangel which he ordered to be said at the end of each Mass throughout the Catholic Church. This is the prayer—

*St Michael the Archangel defend us in the day of battle. Be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God restrain him, we humbly pray, and do thou, the prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all the other evil spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls. Amen.*

The prayer to St Michael was said consistently thereafter throughout the Church at the end of Low Mass (in the Tridentine rite) until the Mass was revised in the Novus Ordo at the end of the 1960s. The prayer has continued, however, wherever Mass has been celebrated in the Tridentine rite. Once more it is receiving popular support.

### **The One Hundred Years**

No Catholic is bound to hold as true what has been privately revealed to an individual by God, even to a Pope. The content of the Catholic faith is set forth by Holy Mother Church drawn from Revelation and Tradition. It is sufficient for our salvation.

*Throughout the ages there have been so called 'private' revelations, some of which have been recognised by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. Guided by the magisterium of the Church, the sensus fidelium knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church.*

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.67*

No one is bound to believe, then, that Satan would have, or has had, power over the Church to harm it as is said to have been revealed to Pope Leo XIII. Yet who could study the history of the Church during the course of the Twentieth Century and beyond and not wonder whether the vision had not been a true one? Or not see in it some consolation for us who, as members of God's Holy Church, have suffered with her for so long over the negligences, the derelictions of duty of those appointed as shepherds, of the loss of faith amongst her members and of the loss of standing of the Church in the world?

To abstract from the appalling moral and physical evils which beset the Church in every country throughout the world today and look only at the state of Catholic belief, what impresses is the extent of the influence of the heresy of Modernism—the movement to conform the teaching of the Church to the standards of the atheistic and secular world. This heresy is universal, a universality only matched by the extent to which its existence is denied or ignored amongst the faithful. There is no mention of the heresy or of the encyclical which condemned it, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (September 8<sup>th</sup> 1907), in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. There is no mention there either of the Pope who condemned the heresy, the only Pope to be canonised in 400 years, St Pius X.

In the course of a homily on the Solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul, in St Peter's, on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1972, Pope Paul VI remarked—*I have the feeling that the smoke of Satan has penetrated the Temple of God through some crack or other*. How much worse has the situation in the Church become in the thirty years since he spoke!

Assuming the truth of what was said to have been revealed to Pope Leo, then, the question arises: when did the 100 years begin? When will they end? God knows, and He alone. As a working hypothesis, however, one might regard the death of the great Pope in 1903 as the beginning of the period. If so, we may hope that the power of the Devil would begin to be diminished by the end of 2003.

In anticipation that this might prove to be the case and that we might cooperate with Almighty God in the overthrow of Satan's power in the Church, this web site has been set up. In the words of yet another prayer composed by Pope Leo XIII we pray—

*O God, our refuge and our strength, look down with mercy on Thy people who cry to Thee. Through the intercession of the glorious and immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God, of St Joseph, her spouse, and of all the saints in mercy and goodness hear our prayers for the conversion of sinners and for the liberty and exaltation of our Holy Mother, the Church through Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

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