

PIUS X, A TRUE SON OF ST. FRANCIS

It may not be generally known to our readers that the late Sovereign Pontiff, Pius X, was a Franciscan Tertiary, and now that he is passed to his eternal reward, it will not be amiss briefly to trace his connection with the Franciscan Order and to enumerate a few incidents of his life which show him to have been a true follower of St. Francis.

Pope Pius X was a member of the Third Order since the year 1870. He was admitted into the Order by the Rev. Honoratus Bindoni in the cathedral of Treviso. As pastor of Salzano, Joseph Sarto directed the Third Order of the parish and left it in a blooming condition.

As Bishop of Mantua, he regularly took part in the meetings, often spoke to the Tertiaries, and after the meeting he was ever ready to grant an audience to any one seeking help or advice. This example of their bishop induced many of the younger clergy to be enrolled in the Third Order.

As Patriarch of Venice, he adhered closely to the Rule of the Third Order; in his pastoral letters, he often referred to it, and at times he invited some eloquent orator to preach on it. In 1896, a Tertiary Congress was held in his palace at Venice, and he himself was one of the principal speakers. Accompanied by 2,000 Venetians he made a pilgrimage to Assisi in 1896 to visit the tomb of St. Francis and the other places dear to the heart of every Tertiary.

As soon as he was elected Pope, he assumed the protectorate of the Friars Minor, and during his reign, he often warmly advocated the Third Order. At an audience granted to Professor Salvator Licitra, director of the Third Order at Ragusa, he spoke the memorable words: "I bless the Third Order which is very dear to me." When in 1904, he received the Roman Tertiaries in audience, he gave vent to his feelings, and extolled St. Francis and his Third Order in eloquent terms. As Pope, he raised four Tertiaries to the honor of the altar. They are, Blessed John B. Vianney, Cure D'Ars, Blessed Vivaldus of Ayo, Blessed Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans, and the Tertiary priest Bartolus.

The many edifying deeds of true virtue, which His Holiness performed as a poor, barefoot boy in Riesi, as a model student in Padua, as a zealous pastor in Salzano, as a true-hearted bishop in Mantua, as a beloved Patriarch in Venice, and, finally as Vicar of Christ in Rome,—all this is ample proof that Pius X was a worthy son of the humble Saint of Assisi.

Among other good qualities, the late Holy Father possessed genuine piety, deep humility, and true charity.

Joseph Sarto received a thorough Christian training from his poor but virtuous parents. His saintly mother knew not how to read nor write, she could not even sign her own name when she was married, but she knew the value of leading a life pleasing to God. She had a deep love for God and the Blessed Virgin Mary. She received Holy Communion quite frequently, and made many a visit to the shrine of Cendrole, dedicated to our Blessed Lady. Her pious example, no doubt, had a salutary effect on all her children, and, especially on Joseph. When Joseph Sarto became bishop, he well remembered the good influence which the piety of his mother made upon him. He wrote at that time; "Man's character is formed in youth. The heart of a child is like a plot of new ground; it will take in good or bad seed and yield fruit accord-

ingly. If the training and teaching is good, the child will almost invariably be good also."

Whenever Joseph Sarto visited his home in later years, as seminarian or priest or bishop or cardinal, he was sure to retrace his steps to the little chapel at Cendrole. As pope he proved his devotion to the Mother of God, when in 1904 the Jubilee of the Immaculate Conception was celebrated. He granted many favors and indulgences on this occasion, and himself composed a beautiful prayer to the spotless Mother of Christ.

Pius X has also given evidence of his piety by his love and zeal for the Blessed Eucharist. He issued several decrees concerning the august Sacrament of the Altar with the object of bringing the people of all classes and conditions of life nearer to our Eucharistic Lord. Frequent Communion and the Communion of the innocent children have made a great change in the Church of Christ, and it was the piety of the Holy Father that gave the impetus.

The piety of Pius X was deep and solid; the same may be said of his humility. Although Joseph Sarto was specially gifted in mind and body, he never boasted or made a show of himself. When the Cardinals met in conclave, in 1903, to elect a successor to Leo XIII, the choice fell on Joseph Sarto, the Patriarch of Venice. "Who is Joseph Sarto?" the people asked one another. "Whence does he hail?" Cardinal Sarto, a child of the people, a hard-working, unassuming priest, a bishop who had restored order quietly but effectively, a patriarch of Venice, whose conduct with his diocesans and the civil authorities was marked by kindness and moderation,—this quiet, modest, and humble man was to occupy the highest office in the Church. Cardinal Sarto was taken by surprise and by fear when he noticed that the votes were fast coming in his favor. With tears in his eyes, he most earnestly besought the Cardinals to choose another. "Almighty God knows it," he said, "that I am not worthy of the high office, and not capable of filling it." When the Cardinals insisted on his election, the humble man accepted the heavy burden, putting all his trust in the Lord.

Pius X was comparatively poor as Pope, and the reason for this was, because he had so great a charity for the poor and the distressed. The people knew his love and pity for them, and they made good use of his weak point. While acting as pastor in Salzano, he was very closely watched by the poor. If a wealthy family had a child baptized, or if some rich person had died, the poor parishioners would wait at the church-door for their generous pastor, and he would not divide the special stipend with them, no, he would give them the last farthing. The only thing that seemed to grieve the holy priest, was his frequent inability to help the poor. Once he had purchased a supply of wood for the winter. His poor parishioners soon appeared in great numbers to beg a few pieces, and they did their work so well that in a few days not a stick of wood remained. When Patriarch of Venice, Joseph Sarto received a salary of 23,000 liras, and though that was hardly enough to cover his expenses, still the poor would receive a good portion of it. A high personage once presented the Patriarch with a gold watch but that, too, soon disappeared. Sarto made a present of it to a man who was in need while he himself continued to carry his old nickel-plated time-piece. Two of his sisters had charge of the household, and they found it necessary to keep his laundry and other articles under lock and key, or he would have given everything to the poor.

Many other edifying stories are related of the piety, the humility, and the charity of the late Holy Father, but these will suffice to show that he was a true son of St. Francis of Assisi, a worthy member of the Third Order. May the remembrance of his virtues linger long in the memory of every Tertiary, and may they send up fervent and frequent prayers to the throne of God for the repose of the soul of their illustrious Brother in St. Francis.

SERRA

In dreams he saw a wondrous land afar,
 Where blue skies smiled, so like the skies of Spain;
 A magic shore where summer was enthroned,
 Where every day and every night is fair.
 In vision saw the forests towering high,
 Where roamed the savage children of the wild;
 Their souls enshrouded by the shades of death,
 With none to break to them the Bread of Life.
 And ever through his dreams they seemed to call,
 His poor, benighted brothers far away;
 Their suppliant voices begged him come to them,
 Across the billows of the sunset sea.
 At last he came, a messenger of peace,
 With cross upraised he journeyed far and near,
 'Neath skies so like his well-loved skies of Spain.
 Into the fold he brought the sheep long strayed
 Without a shepherd, and they loved him well,
 Those children of the forest; trustingly
 They called him "Father", and in him they saw
 An image of the Christ who died for them.
 Serra! the world to-day hath need of thee,
 For lust of gold and pride and powerful sway,
 And blind self-worship numbs the souls of men.
 The world doth prate about the great and wise,
 But such as thou alone can point the way
 Of wisdom and true greatness. Love of God
 And love of fellow men thy being filled
 And wheresoe'er on earth men's souls are stirred,
 By hero deeds of love and sacrifice,
 Thy name shall be remembered and revered.
 And brown-robed Knight of God, thy name shall live,
 While time shall last, and through eternal years.

Catherine Maria Hayes, Tertiary