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Two Letters.: Which Do You Prefer?

"Dear Father O'Hara: After reading carefully your Bulletin today, noting especially your diatribe on the Marlborough-Vandervilt case it is clearly evident that the Catholic Church need give no reason at any time for her decisions. A rational man requires reasons for a belief in some thing. Surely there are rational men in the Church. Why should there be Expositions on Christian Doctrine, Catechisms, pamphlets and the like if there is no need for the Church to give reasons for her decisions. There are always reasons for belief in mysteries, Christ's words, the Bible and the teachings of the Apostles and their successors. Clearly, Father, you are wrong when you say the Catholic Church needs not give reasons for her decisions. The Church must and does give reasons and always will continue to do so.

"Evidently in giving no reasons in the Marlborough case you wish to sidestep a delicate subject. Wealth and a great name still seem to carry weight before the Papal Court. Surely a woman married for a number of years, having two children, living in seeming harmony with her husband has no right to seek annulment of her marriage with a plea of a marriage under force. If at any time the annulment should have been given a short time after the marriage never in after years. The man she claimed to have loved she did not marry when she divorced her husband, rather one with whom she had no acquaintance at the time of her marriage. Could you kindly answer this letter in the Bulletin -- Two Sophomores."

You know about the catechism, then. If you will really study it this time you will find that Christ sent the Catholic Church to teach, not to give reasons. Christ taught; He did not give reasons. Historically, we prove that Christ was Divine, using the He Himself appealed to -- His works. Historically we prove that the Catholic Church is divinely established. Once the divinity of the Church is established, our mind accepts what the Church teaches, whether it understands it or not.

If you are not sophomores, at least you have one of the distinct signs of sophomoritis -- lack of the power of discrimination. What you have missed is clearly stated by Father Gerrard in his preface to Seisenberger's "Practical Handbook for the Study of the Bible:" "When the Church speaks officially through the Sacred Congregations, she does not argue with her children. She teaches them. She says, plainly, what is the truth concerning the Divine Revelation. Then, after the Church has spoken, the work of the theologians and critics begins. It is their office to justify the Word of the Church to men." This justification is not needed for those who accept the Catholic Church as God's mouthpiece, viz., Catholics; it is needed by those who reject the Church's authority, viz., non-Catholics. Since you seem not to be Catholics, you are entitled to an explanation of this case. You will find a very good one in Bishop Dunn's statement in the Chicago Tribune for Friday, November 26.

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The other letter is from a Catholic, Silas Ballou's mother: "Illness prevented my writing you sooner, but I wish to express my deepest appreciation for your wonderful Spiritual Bouquet and the Religious Bulletins, treasures I will always cherish with the sweet memories of Silas. Among his things I found the daily Bulletins of last year carefully arranged..... there seemed to be something sacred to him in everything pertaining to Notre Dame. Silas came home ill in June, but not until along in July did he give up completely. In the long weeks of suffering he never uttered a word of complaint, and he was visited nearly every day by our good priests of the Blessed Sacrament Church. -- God was good to me. He gave me strength to care for Silas through it all. The last two weeks he did not suffer, and the end came peacefully -- visited on his last day on earth by four good priests, and laid to rest in the beautiful Holy Sepulchre Cemetery on All Souls' Day. -- Alice L. Ballou."