

Saint Benedict Center

The Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

To Our Readers:

The breathtaking account of the life and achievements of Saint Peter Claver, reported in the lead article of this issue, constitutes a constructive criticism of the darkest blot on the history of the Americas, both North and South, as well as a challenge for the future, with a ray of hope. The Saint, in fact, was the Catholic answer to the problem of slavery, a problem of which the consequences are still very much with us: racial tension, national disunity, and stubborn hindrances to the progress of Christianity, to mention only a few of the leading and lasting effects. Even to our own generation, Saint Peter Claver is a clarion call. His message to the seventeenth century is still proclaiming to the world that the most difficult human problems find in the Catholic Faith solutions that reason and the natural mind know nothing about. I only need to suggest the clue. The deeds of the Saint will do the rest.

The readers will also find in this issue some authentic documents by our founder, the late Father Leonard Feeney. Another champion of Catholicity, Father Feeney had his lot of labors and contradictions, of enemies who calumniated him, and disciples who misrepresented or distorted what he taught. He would apply to himself the prayer of a legendary wit:

O God, protect me from my friends, and I can take care of my enemies!

As you shall find, in the following pages Father Feeney speaks for himself through signed statements, now that he is beyond the reach of friend or foe. You will also find a testimony to Father Feeney's teachings, written at the request of an archbishop, by one who likes to think of himself as a qualified and faithful disciple.

Our concern over Communist and Masonic infiltration explains the presence of several themes and features in the pages to follow.

Three themes characterize this, as every other issue of our periodical *From the Husetops*:

One, defense of Faith and Tradition

Two, obedience truly Catholic (which never becomes, in the hands of the enemy, a weapon used to destroy the Church).

Three, genuine patriotism, of which every Catholic ought to be a shining example.

Faithfully and devotedly in
the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,



Brother Francis, M. I. C. M.

from the Husetops

MATTHEW 10:27

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Saint Peter Claver

SLAVE OF SLAVES

Brother Michael, M.I.C.M.

Cartagena, Colombia

Across the sea a ship arose on the horizon. It could be a supply boat with some long-awaited news from back home in Spain, or it might be a slave ship, or even an enemy man-of-war. The gentle waves of the blue Caribbean sparkled in the sun as anxious eyes riveted on the distant vessel to read some clue as to its identity. Soon it was clear—no cause for joy or alarm—it was only a slave ship. The avaricious smiled, the humane shuddered and walked away, and the curious were glad to have a new opportunity to do what they do.

Meanwhile, a man of importance ran through the streets, totally oblivious to human respect, and knocked forcefully at a door. In a second, a priest opened it. The piercing sunken eyes of the padre read instantly the news in the messenger's excited face, "It's a slave ship, Father!" Suddenly the grave expression of the priest changed into joy. His whole countenance beamed as if he had seen a vision. "The slave ship is here," he crescendoed, "then the hook must be baited."

With a precision made second nature through routine, the good father gathered together his little army with their provisions and set out to battle. This army was a militia of charity; its commander-in-chief was Father Peter Claver,

a Jesuit, the hero of our story. His troops—eighteen Negro interpreters, a Jesuit brother, a pious woman or two, and usually some prominent Cartagenian official. In this case, the dignitary was the governor himself, Don Jeronimo Zueso Casasola, the same man who raced to tell Father Claver the good news. For this extraordinary Jesuit, whose life we are about to study, the arrival of a slave ship was like the homecoming of a long lost son.

But what a wretched lot was that of the poor slaves! The agony and misery of this human cargo, crammed into the holds of these galleons, defies an adequate description. For two months, these blacks had been chained and shackled below deck in a floating hell, the men in one compartment, the women in another. They lay there together, in fear, like sardines, naked and bleeding in the cold damp of winter or the excruciating heat of summer, with but one daily feeding of corn and water to sustain them.

One shipload would average between five and six hundred blacks from as many as fifteen or twenty African nations or tribes. Sometimes two men chained together would be from warring tribes, and horrifying scenes of rage would take place. But, after a week or two, hunger, sickness and disease numbed these kinds of outbursts. Usually about one