

POPE'S DEATH IMMINENT

An Interesting Account of the Ceremonies Attending the Decease of a Pontiff.



Rome, Jan. 10.—Recent reports received from the Vatican say that His Holiness Leo XIII. is falling fast and there is now but little doubt that the end of his life is nearly run out. The following description of the gorgeous ceremonies performed upon the death of a pope are therefore particularly interesting just at this time.

When the doctors certify His Holiness to have ceased to live in this world the Cardinal Camerlengo, robed in violet, and the Clerks of the Chamber, robed in black, will approach the corpse and, tapping him three times on the forehead with a silver mallet, they will invoke the dead Pope by the name which his mother called him in his boyhood: "Giacchino! Giacchino! Giacchino!"

If no sign of life is given after this strange summons the Apostolic Prothonotaries draw up the Act of Death. From the lifeless finger the Chamberlain draws the Fisherman's ring of massive gold, worth a hundred gold crowns, and, having broken it up, divides the fragments among the six Masters of Ceremonies.

The Apostolic Dean and his secretaries carry all the other seals to the Cardinal Camerlengo, who breaks them also in the presence of the Auditor, the Treasurer and the Apostolic Clerks. No other Cardinals may assist at this function.

The pontifical nephews and the Cardinal Patron must quit the place now. The Camerlengo takes possession in the name of the Apostolic Chamber, making an inventory of what furniture has survived the spoliation.

Twelve pontifical robes of St. Peter's church, with chaplains see the body shrouded and embalm with new perfumes. They vest it in the pontifical habits, crown it with a mitre and place a shroud in the hands.

After four and twenty hours the pontifical robes and the chaplains bear the corpse upon an open bier to St. Peter's Church. Candles meet them. The ordinary prayers for one dead are chanted.

The dead Pope lies in state on a lofty catafalque, where many tapers burn in the chapel of the Holy Trinity. Through the grille the faithful kiss the feet.

After three days the corpse is laid in lead. Two and fifty cardinals of the Pope's creation are put in gold and silver models, having the effigy of the dead pontiff on one side and some notable act of his on the other.

The leaden coffin is placed inside a casket covered withypress wood and wellied up in some part of the basilica.

If the holy father shall have chosen his place of sepulchre, even when living or by his will, the translation of his remains must not take place until at least one year shall have elapsed, except a ransom of money be paid to the Chapter of St. Peter's Church. Sometimes the cost is more than a million, especially in the case of a Pope, who, having departed this life in the odor of sanctity, may one day be canonized.

The expenses of the obsequies will be borne by the Apostolic Chamber.

On the first and ninth day after death two hundred masses of requiem are offered, the first and last being chanted by a cardinal bishop assisted by four mitred cardinals. On the second to the eighth day inclusive one hundred masses are said daily.

During the vacancy of the Holy See affairs are administered by the Cardinal Camerlengo, assisted by the First Cardinal Bishop, the First Cardinal Priest and by the first Cardinal Deacon.

The conclave must assemble ten days after the death of the Pope. First the mass of the Holy Ghost is chanted in the chapel of St. Gregory. Then the cardinals go in procession, two and two according to their rank, surrounded by the Swiss Guard and singing "Veni Creator Spiritus," to take possession of the cells assigned to each by lot.

Having viewed their quarters, the cardinals go to the Pauline Chapel, where bulls concerning the election of a Pope are read. To these the Cardinal Dean exhorts the conclave to conform.

Then all may dine at home in comfort for the last time till a new Pope begins to reign, but their Eminences are bound to return to the Vatican before 9 p. m. on pain of entrance being barred. Three hours after sunset doors are shut and walled up on the inside with masonry. Guards on the outside watch every avenue. The Apostolic Prothonotaries write it as an act of the conclave.

One door is not walled up, in case some cardinal or conclave must need to retire on account of illness. Such may not return. There is a lock on each side of the door. The outside key is of the Prince Savelli, Hereditary Marshal of the Church. The Cardinal Camerlengo holds the inside key.

To ever cardinal are allowed two confidants for his attendants, a chaplain and a squire. A cardinal-prince or a cardinal aged or infirm may add a third. In addition to their Eminences and these confidants there are included a secretary (always an Augustinian friar) and his sub-secretary, a secretary and his sub-secretary, five masters of ceremonies, a surgeon, two barbers, an apothecary of these respective boys, a mason, a carpenter and sixteen servants for menial work. Great care is taken in choosing these lay persons lest any of them should be secret agents of the ministers of the secular powers.

There are five ways by which a Pope may be elected.

1. By compromise—i. e., when the cardinals appoint a committee of themselves with power to name the Pope.

2. By inspiration—i. e., when a body of cardinals get themselves to shout: "The Jesuit Cardinal is Pope!" or "The Cardinal of Westminster is Pope!" by which method other voices are attracted, and the unanimous majority of two-thirds plus one attained.

3. By acclamation—i. e., when a unanimous majority of two-thirds plus one of the cardinals spontaneously adore a certain cardinal of their college.

4. By scrutiny—i. e., when each cardinal records a vote in writing secretly. A Pope is rarely found by scrutiny.

5. By accession—i. e., when the scrutiny having failed to give the minimum majority of two-thirds plus one to any cardinal, the opponents of him whose tally is highest abate to him.

The first three ways are obsolete, and these two—scrutiny and accession—alone need be considered.

Blank voting papers are handed to the cardinals. Each voting paper is a palm in length and half a palm in breadth. Each cardinal in turn takes his folded voting paper between the thumb and index finger of his ringed right hand, holding it aloft in view of all. So, and alone, he goes to the altar, makes his genuflection on the lowest step; on the highest step he swears his oath aloud that his vote is free.

On the paten which covers one of the great golden chalices he lays his voting paper. He tilts the paten until the paper slides from it into the chalice. He replaces the paten as a cover and returns unattended to his throne.

When every vote has been recorded thus the Augustinian scrierian slugs the Mass of the Holy Ghost. The two great golden chalices, one empty and the other full of voting papers, stand upon the altar. Three prelates, called scrutineers, watch these.

At the end the last scrutineer takes the folded voting papers one by one, high and slowly, so that all may count them, and puts them from the full into the empty chalice.

If there be fewer or more voting papers than there be cardinals present he burns them all, and their Eminences must vote again.

But when the number of voting papers equals the number of Cardinals present, the First Cardinal Bishop, the First Cardinal Priest and the First Cardinal Deacon bring the chalice full of voting papers from the altar to the table of scrutiny. They retire and the scrutineers approach the table and face the Sacred College.

The first scrutineer empties the chalice onto the table. One by one he opens the folded papers, looks at the name of the cardinal on each and passes the paper to the second scrutineer. This one also looks and passes the paper to the third scrutineer, who reads the name aloud.

When the scrutiny brings forth no Pope with a majority of two-thirds plus

one, the Sacred College tries election by acclamation.

Fresh voting papers are used, on which the cardinals who wish to vote in favor of him who tallied highest in the scrutiny will write "I accede to Lord Soriano, Lord Cardinal of Frascati," or "I accede to Lord Dominic of Mary. Lord Cardinal of Tyre." These accessions are placed in the chalice on the altar with the ceremonies of the scrutiny, but the oath is not re-sworn.

If no one yet attains minimum majority of two-thirds plus one—that is to say, 77 votes—the conclave will retire from the Sistine Chapel until the following day, and the ineffectual votes are burned.

This procedure obtains day after day until all cliques are broken down, until all doubts have disappeared, until the Holy Spirit sends His light to lighten the minds of men that they may send the will of God and give it force.

When at last a pope has been elected three Apostolic Prothonotaries record the act of the conclave and all the cardinals sign and seal it. The Cardinal Dean demands the new Pope's consent to his own election and the name by which he wishes to be known.

The first and second Cardinal Deacons conduct His Holiness to the rear of the altar with the master of ceremonies and the Augustinian scrierian; they take away his cardinal scarlet and vest him in a cassock of white tafeta with ceinture, a fair white linen rochet and papal stole, a crimson almuce, and shoes of crimson cloth embroidered in gold.

The new Pope sits upon a chair before the altar in the Sistine Chapel and the Cardinal Dean, followed by other Eminences in their order, kneel to adore His Holiness, kissing the cross upon his shoe, the ring upon his hand, whereas the Sovereign Pontiff makes the kneeler rise and accords him the Kiss of Peace upon both cheeks.

Then the master mason breaks open the walled up door. The First Cardinal Deacon goes to the balcony of St. Peter's and to the city and to the world proclaims: "I announce to you great joy, We have a Pope."

This acclamation must not be misunderstood. It is rendered to God whose earthly vicar, according to the Roman faith, is the Pope, the successor of St. Peter and the Roman Emperor, to whom formerly divine honor was paid.

In St. Peter's Church "Te Deum Laudamus" is chanted now. The papal benediction is imparted and the Pope is borne away by twelve porters, clad in scarlet, to his private chamber.

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