

Blessed Pius IX

1792 - 1878

PARADISE

The testimony of a seven-year-old child included in the canonization proceedings for Blessed Pius IX describes his entrance into Paradise: “In a noble Catholic family in Belgium a child of about seven years was dying. The grief-stricken mother was at his bedside, waiting for her child’s last breath. It was February 7, 1878 at 5:45 in the afternoon as the Angelus bell was ringing. All of a sudden the child became full of life, sat up, looked intently at heaven, and exclaimed, ‘Mamma, what a sight!’ ‘What do you see, my son,’ said the mother. ‘Pius IX, who’s going up, up! Oh, how beautiful he is! All full of light!’ The woman believed that the child was delirious and tried to calm him, but a second later he cried out again, ‘Oh, Mamma, what a beautiful thing. Our Lady—how beautiful she is and smiling! She has a precious crown in her hand. Look, she’s going to Pius IX; she’s putting the crown on his head.’ After gazing for a moment at such a joyful scene, the child turned to his astonished mother and said, ‘Mamma, I’m cured. Our Lady and Pius IX have blessed and cured me.’

“The child was, in fact, cured and full of vigor. The devout woman, who was unaware of the alarming state of the

Pope’s health, was beside herself with amazement and sent a servant to the telegraph office to ask if there was news from Rome. A dispatch had just arrived, bearing the sad news that the Holy Father had died at 5:45 that afternoon.”

Blessed Pius IX was born in Senigallia on May 13, 1792 to the noble Mastai Ferretti family. From 1803 to 1808 he studied in Volterra at the College of Noblemen run by the Piarists. Beginning in 1814, he lived with his uncle Paolino, a canon of St. Peter’s, and was able to continue his studies in philosophy and theology at the Roman College. He was ordained a priest on April 10, 1819. The next day he celebrated his first Mass in St. Anne’s Church at the Tata Giovanni Home, where he did apostolic work with young people. On April 24, 1827, at only 35 years of age, he was appointed Archbishop of Spoleto. He was transferred to Imola on December 6, 1832, and was made a cardinal on December 14, 1840. On June 16, 1846, he was elected pope. The following July 16 he granted amnesty for political offenses. From August 1846 to March 1848 he undertook various reforms including freedom of the press. His address of April 29, 1848 against the war with



Austria began a new period. From November 24, 1848 to April 12, 1850, he was forced into exile in Gaeta. On December 8, 1854, he defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. On December 8, 1869, he opened the First Vatican Council. On December 8, 1870, he proclaimed St. Joseph patron of the Universal Church, and on June 16, 1875 he consecrated the Church to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He died on February 7, 1878.

