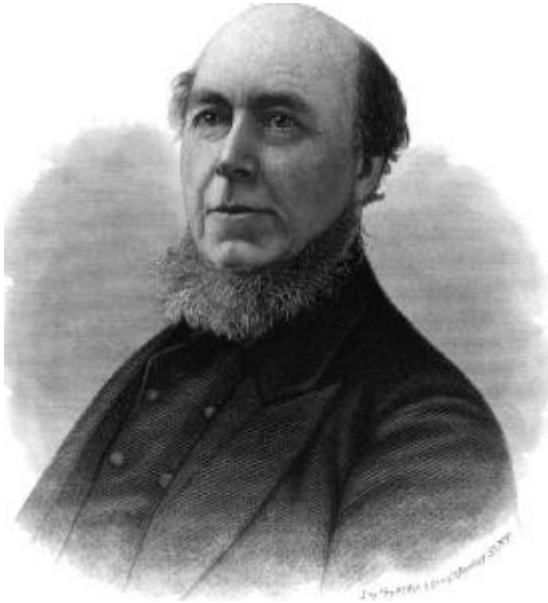


# “Hurrah for St. Anne, the grave of the tyranny of the Bishops of Rome in America!”



Charles Chiniquy

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I hope you find the title of this post intriguing enough to want to know the story behind it. It was the cry of the French Canadian immigrates of St. Anne Illinois to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Chicago on August 3rd, 1858.

St. Anne is a village in Kankakee County, Illinois, United States, about 50 kilometers south of Chicago. It was founded by a French Canadian Roman Catholic priest (who later converted to Protestantism) by the name of Charles Chiniquy. He was also a friend and adviser of Abraham Lincoln

The story below is taken from chapter 66 of Charles Chiniquy's book, "[Fifty Years in the Church of Rome](#)"

On the 27th of July, a devoted priest, through my friend, Mr. Dunn, of Chicago, sent me the following copy of a letter, written by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Illinois (Duggan) to several of his co-bishops: "The schism of the apostate, Chiniquy, is spreading with an incredible and most irresistible velocity. I am told that he has not less then ten thousand followers from his countrymen. Though I hope that this number is an exaggeration, it shows that the evil is great; and that we must not lose any time in trying to open the eyes of the deluded people he is leading to perdition. I intend (D.V.) to visit the very citadel of that deplorable schism, next Tuesday, the 3rd of August. As I speak French almost as well as English, I will address the deluded people of St. Anne in their own language. My intention is to unmask Chiniquy, and show what kind of a man he is. Then I will show the people the folly of believing that they can read and interpret

the Scriptures, by their own private judgment. After which, I will easily show them that out of the Church of Rome there is no salvation. Pray to the blessed Virgin Mary that she may help me reclaim that poor deceived people."

Having read that letter to the people on the first Sabbath of August, I said: "We know a man only after he has been tried. So we know the faith of a Christian only after it has been through the fire of tribulations. I thank God that next Tuesday will be the day chosen by Him to show the world that you are worthy of being in the front rank of the great army Jesus Christ is gathering to fight His implacable enemy, the Pope, on this continent. Let every one of you come and hear what the bishop has to say. Not only those who are in good health must come, but even the sick must be brought to hear and judge for themselves. If the bishop fulfills his promise to show you that I am a depraved and wicked man, you must turn me out. You must give up or burn your Bibles, at his bidding, if he proves that you have neither the right to read, nor the intelligence to understand them; and if he shows you that, out of the Church of Rome, there is no salvation, you must, without an hour's delay, return to that church and submit yourselves to the Pope's bishops. But if he fails (as he will surely do) you know what you have to do. Next Tuesday will be a most glorious day for us all. A great and decisive battle will be fought here, such as this continent has never witnessed, between the great principles of Christian truth and liberty, and the principles of lies and tyranny of the Pope. I have only one word more to say: From this moment to the solemn hour of the conflict, let us humbly, but fervently ask our great God, through His beloved and eternal Son, to look down upon us in His mercy, enlighten and strengthen us, that we may be true to Him, to ourselves, and to His Gospel, and then, the angels of heaven will unite with all the elect of God on earth to bless you for the great and glorious victory you will win."

Never had the sun shone more brightly on our beautiful hill than on the 3rd of August, 1858. The hearts had never felt so happy, and the faces had never been so perfectly the mirrors of joyful minds, as on that day, among the multitudes which began to gather from every corner of the colony, a little after twelve o'clock, noon.

Seeing that our chapel, though very large, would not be able to contain half the audience, we had raised a large and solid platform, ten feet high, in the middle of the public square, in front of the chapel. We covered it with carpets, and put a sofa, with a good number of chairs, for the bishop, his long suite of priests, and one for myself, and a large table for the different books of references I wanted to have at hand, to answer the bishop.

At about two o'clock p.m., we perceived his carriage, followed by several others filled with priests. He was dressed in his white surplice, and his official "bonnet carre" on his head, evidently to more surely command the respect and awe of the multitude.

I had requested the people to keep silence and show him all the respect and courtesy due a gentleman who was visiting them, for the first time.

As soon as his carriage was near the chapel, I gave a signal, and up went the American flag to the top of a mast put on the sacred edifice. It was to warn

the ambassador of the Pope that he was not treading the land of the holy inquisition and slavery, but **the land of Freedom and Liberty**. The bishop understood it. For, raising his head to see that splendid flag of stripes and stars, waving to the breeze, **he became pale to death**. And his uneasiness did not abate, when the thousands round him rent the air with the cry: "Hurrah for the flag of the free and the brave!" The bishop and his priests thought this was the signal I had given to slaughter them; for they had been told several times, that I and my people were so depraved and wicked that their lives were in great danger among us. Several priests who had not much relish for the crown of martyrdom, jumped from their carriages and ran away, to the great amusement of the crowd. Perceiving the marks of the most extreme terror on the face of the bishop, I ran to tell him that there was not the least danger, and assured him of the pleasure we had to see him in our midst.

I offered my hand to help him down from his carriage, but he refused it. After some minutes of trembling and hesitation, he whispered a few words in the ear of his Grand Vicar Mailloux, who was well known by my people, and of whom I have already spoken. I knew that it was by his advice that the bishop was among us, and it was by his instigation that Bishop Smith had refused the submission we had given him.

Rising slowly, he said with a loud voice: "My dear French Canadian countrymen, here is your holy bishop. Kneel down, and he will give you his benediction."

But, to the great disgust of the poor grand vicar, this so well laid plan for beginning the battle failed entirely. Not a single one of that immense multitude cared for the benediction. Nobody knelt.

Thinking that he had not spoken loud enough, he raised his voice to the highest pitch and cried:

"My dear fellow countrymen: This is your holy bishop. He comes to visit you. Kneel down, and he will give you his benediction."

But nobody knelt, and, what was worse, a voice from the crowd answered:

"Do you not know, sir, that there we no longer bend the knee before any man? It is only before God we kneel."

The whole people cried "Amen!" to that noble answer. I could not refrain a tear of joy from falling down my cheeks, when I saw how this first effort of the ambassador of the Pope to entrap my people had signally failed. But though I thanked God from the bottom of my heart for this first success He had given to His soldiers, I knew the battle was far from being over.

I implored Him to bide with us, to be our wisdom and our strength to the end. I looked at the bishop, and seeing his countenance as distressed as before, I offered him my hand again, but he refused it the second time with supreme disdain, but accepted the invitation I gave him to come to the platform.

When half way up the stairs he turned, and seeing me following him, he put forth his hand to prevent me from ascending any further, and said: "I do not

want you on this platform; go down, and let my priests alone accompany me.”

I answered him: “It may be that you do not want me there, but I want to be at your side to answer you. Remember that you are not on your own ground here, but on mine!”

He then, silently and slowly, walked up. When on the platform, I offered him a good arm-chair, which he refused, and sat on one of his own choice, with his priests around him. I then addressed him as follows:

“My lord, the people and pastor of St. Anne are exceedingly pleased to see you in their midst. We promise to listen attentively to what you have to say, on condition that we have the privilege of answering you.”

He answered angrily: “I do not want you to say a word here.”

Then stepping to the front, he began his address in French, with a trembling voice. But it was a miserable failure from beginning to end. In vain did he try to prove that out of the Church of Rome, there is no salvation. He failed still more miserably to prove that the people have neither the right to read the Scriptures, nor the intelligence to understand them. He said such ridiculous things on that point, that the people went into fits of laughter, and some said: “This is not true. You do not know what you are talking about. The Bible says the very contrary.”

But I stopped them by reminding them of the promise they had made of not interrupting him.

A little before the closing of his address, he turned to me and said: “You are a wicked, rebel priest against your holy church. Go from here into a monastery to do penance for your sins. You say that you have never been excommunicated in a legal way! Well, you will not say that any longer, for I excommunicate you now before this whole people.”

I interrupted him and said: “You forget that you have no right to excommunicate a man who has publicly left your church long ago.”

He seemed to realize that he had made a fool of himself in uttering such a sentence, and stopped speaking for a moment. Then, recalling his lost courage, he took a new and impressive manner of speaking. He told the people how their friends, their relatives, their very dear mothers and fathers in Canada were weeping over their apostasy. He spoke for a time with great earnestness of the desolation of all those who loved them, at the news of their defection from their holy mother church. Then, resuming, he said: “My dear friends: Please tell me what will be your guide in the ways of God after you have left the holy church of your fathers, the church of your country; who will lead you in the ways of God?”

Those words, which have been uttered with great emphasis and earnestness, were followed by a most complete and solemn silence. Was that silence the result of a profound impression made on the crowd, or was it the silence which always precedes the storm? I could not say. But I must confess that, though I had not lost confidence in God, I was not without anxiety. Though

silent and ardent prayers were going to the mercy-seat from my heart, I felt that that poor heart was troubled and anxious, as it had never been before. I could have easily answered the bishop and confounded him in a few words; but I thought that it was much better to let the answer and rebuke come from the people.

The bishop, hoping that the long and strange silence was a proof that he had successfully touched the sensitive cords of the hearts, and that he was to win the day, exclaimed a second time with still more power and earnestness: "My dear French Canadian friends: I ask you, in the name of Jesus Christ, your Saviour and mine, in the name of your desolated mothers, fathers, and friends who are weeping along the banks of your beautiful St. Lawrence River I ask it in the name of your beloved Canada! Answer me! now that you refuse to obey the holy Church of Rome, who will guide you in the ways of salvation?"

Another solemn silence followed that impassionate and earnest appeal. But this silence was not to be long. When I had invited the people to come and hear the bishop, I requested them to bring their Bibles. Suddenly we heard the voice of an old farmer, who, raising his Bible over his head with his two hands, said: "This Bible is all we want to guide us in the ways of God. We do not want anything but the pure Word of God to teach us what we must do to be saved. As for you, sir, you had better go away and never come here any more."

And more than five thousand voices said "Amen!" to that simple and yet sublime answer. The whole crowd filled the air with cries: "The Bible! the Holy Bible, the holy Word of God is our only guide in the ways of eternal life! Go away, sir, and never come again!"

These words, again and again repeated by the thousands of people who surrounded the platform, fell upon the poor bishop's ears as formidable claps of thunder. They were ringing as his death-knell in his ears. The battle was over, and he had lost it.

Bathed in his tears, suffocated by his sobs, he sat or, to speak more correctly, he fell into the arm-chair, and I feared at first lest he should faint. When I saw that he was recovering and strong enough to hear what I had to say, I stepped to the front of the platform. But I had scarcely said two words when I felt as if the claws of a tiger were on my shoulders. I turned and found that it was the clenched fingers of the bishop, who was shaking me while he was saying with a furious voice: "No! no! not a word from you."

As I was about to show him that I had a right to refute what he had said, my eyes fell on a scene which baffles all description. Those only who have seen the raging waves of the sea suddenly raised by the hurricane can have an idea of it. The people had seen the violent hand of the bishop raised against me; they had heard his insolent and furious words forbidding me to say a single word in answer: and a universal cry of indignation was heard: "The infamous wretch! Down with him! He wants to enslave us again! he denies us the right of free speech! he refuses to hear what our pastor has to reply! Down with him!" At the same time a rush was made by many toward the platform to scale it, and others were at work to tear it down. That whole multitude, absolutely

blinded by their uncontrollable rage, were as a drunken man who does not know what he does. I had read that such things had occurred before, but I hope I shall never see it again. I rushed to the head of the stairs, and with great difficulty repulsed those who were trying to lay their hands on the bishop. In vain I raised my voice to calm them, and make them realize the crime they wanted to commit. No voice could be heard in the midst of such terrible confusion. It was very providential that we had built the scaffold with strong materials, so that it could resist the first attempt to break it.

Happily, we had in our midst a very intelligent young man called Bechard, who was held in great esteem and respect. His influence, I venture to say, was irresistible over the people. I called him to the platform, and requested him, in the name of God, to appease the blind fury of that multitude. Strange to say, his presence and a sign from his hand acted like magic.

"Let us hear what Bechard has to say," whispered every one to his neighbour, and suddenly the most profound calm succeeded the most awful noise and confusion I had ever witnessed. In a few appropriate and eloquent words, that young gentleman showed the people that, far from being angry, they ought to be glad at the exhibition of the tyranny and cowardice of the bishop. Had he not confessed the weakness of his address when he refused to hear the answer? Had he not confessed that he was the vilest and the most impudent of tyrants when he had come into their very midst to deny them the sacred right of speech and reply? Had he not proved, before God and man, that they had done well to reject, for ever, the authority of the Bishop of Rome, when he was giving them such an unanswerable proof that that authority meant the most unbounded tyranny on his part, and he most degraded and ignominious moral degradation on the part of his blind slaves?

Seeing that they were anxious to hear me, I then told them:

"Instead of being angry, you ought to bless God for what you have heard and seen from the Bishop of Chicago. You have heard, and you are witnesses that he has not given us a single argument to show that we were wrong when he gave up the words of the Pope to follow the words of Christ. Was he not right when he told you that there was no need, on my part, to answer him? Do you not all agree that there was nothing to answer, nothing to refute in his long address? Has not our merciful God brought that bishop into your midst today to show you the truthfulness of what I have so often told you, that there was nothing manly, nothing honest, or true in him? Have you heard from his lips a single word which could have come from the lips of Christ? A word which could have come from that great God who so loved His people that He sent His eternal Son to save them? Was there a single sentence in all you heard which would remind you that salvation through Christ was a gift? that eternal life was a free gift? Have you heard anything from him to make you regret that you are no longer his obedient and abject slaves?"

"No! no!" they replied.

"Then, instead of being angry with that man, you ought to thank him and let him go in peace," I added.

"Yes! yes!" replied the people, "but on condition that he shall never come again."

Then Mons. Bechard stepped to the front, raised his hat, and cried with his powerful voice; "People of St. Anne! you have just gained the most glorious victory which has ever been won by a people against their tyrants. Hurrah for St. Anne, the grave of the tyranny of the Bishops of Rome in America!"

That whole multitude, filled with joy, rent the air with the cry: "Hurrah for St. Anne, the grave of the tyranny of the Bishops of Rome in America!"

I then turned towards the poor bishop and his priests, whose distress and fear were beyond description, and told them: "You see that the people forgive you the iniquity of your conduct, by not allowing them to answer you; but I advise you not to repeat that insult here. Please take the advice they gave you; go away as quickly as possible. I will go with you to your carriage, through the crowd, and I pledge myself that you will be safe, provided you do not insult them again."

Opening their ranks, the crowd made a passage, through which I led the bishop and his long suite of priests to their carriages. This was done in the most profound silence, only a few women whispering to the prelate as he was hurrying by: "Away with you, and never come here again. Henceforward we follow nothing but Christ."

Crushed by waves of humiliation, such as no bishop had ever met with on this continent, the weight of the ignominy which he had reaped in our midst completely overpowered his mind, and ruined him. He left us to wander every day nearer the regions of lunacy. That bishop, whose beginning had been so brilliant, after his shameful defeat at St. Anne, on the 3rd of August, 1858, was soon to end his broken career in the lunatic asylum of St. Louis, where he is still confined to-day.