

# Baculus Pastoralis

Blessed Ildefonso Cardinal Schuster  
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St. Gregory the Great, in the seventh century, gave a fresh impulse to the observance of the stational processions and finally rearranged their order, so that with few exceptions the list of stational basilicas is to-day just as we find it in the Gregorian Sacramentary. The principle followed in arranging the different stations is not always clear, especially with regard to those in Lent, but for the greater festivals the compiler has certainly found it necessary to keep to the traditional and uniform plan.

The ancient and true Cathedral of Rome is St. Peter's. There the chair of the Apostle was preserved, there baptism was administered, there on Ember Saturdays were held the night vigils and ordinations, there the Pope was consecrated, and lastly there, around the *Confessio* of the Apostle, were laid to rest the Pontiffs in their last sleep. In a word, it was the Vatican, with its historical and liturgical memories, rather than the Lateran, the usual residence of the Pope in the Middle Ages, which became the living and authoritative embodiment of the Roman Pontificate. This idea is well expressed in the following lines which the pious pilgrims of the twelfth century repeated in the baptistery of Damasus near the tomb of St. Peter:

*Auxit Apostolicæ geminatum Sedis honorem  
Christus, et ad cælum hanc dedit esse viam;  
Nam cui siderei commisit limina regni,  
Hic habet in terris altera claustra poli.*

Another inscription from the same Vatican baptistery, in expressing the twofold thought of the laver of regeneration, administered by the successor of St. Peter, and that of the wooden chair of the Apostle preserved in the baptistery, unhesitatingly gives to the Vatican church in the title of *Petri sedes*,

Using it in the same signification as we have indicated above:

*Una Petri Sedes, unum verumque lavacrum,  
Vincula nulla tenent quem liquor iste lavat.*

In accordance with this principle the stational Mass on all the greater festivals of the year – Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, etc. – was always at St. Peter's. To the Lateran belonged the honour of being the habitual residence of the Pontiff, who only exceptionally celebrated the great feasts in the Basilica of the Saviour – when, that is, there was some reason for sparing the people the fatigue of the stational procession. Thus, for instance, on the great *feria quinta in Cæna Domini*, the three Masses, for the reconciliation of penitents, for the consecration of the chrism and for the Easter Communion respectively, were all celebrated at St. John Lateran, because it would not have been possible for the faithful to repair three times in one day to St. Peter's, which was then outside the circle of the city walls.