



Adsum

Adsum is published by the seminarians of **Mater Dei Seminary** for the enjoyment of our families, friends, and benefactors.

LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

During this time of penance, Our Holy Mother the Catholic Church imposes upon her children 40 days of fasting and abstinence to purify our souls of sin and to subdue our passions and inclinations to sin. Many of the early Fathers of the Church, in particular, St. Jerome, Pope St. Leo the Great, St. Cyril of Alexandria, and St. Isidore of Seville, confirm that the season of Lent was instituted by the Apostles themselves from the very commencement of the Church. They legislated a universal fast for the ever growing flock of Christ to serve as a spiritual preparation for Our Lord's Resurrection from the dead. The Apostles determined that, as the number forty (40) was a very significant number both in the Old and New Testaments, this solemn penitential season should also consist of 40 days.

When Almighty God punished the world by the Great Flood in the time of Noah, it rained 40 days and 40 nights. During this period, the earth was cleansed from the sin and immorality into which mankind had fallen. In the Book of Exodus the Israelites wandered in the desert as a spiritual purification for 40 years before they were allowed by God to enter the Promised Land. Most significantly in the New Testament, Our Divine Saviour Himself fasted

for 40 days and 40 nights in the desert to give us the example of penance.

How will we spend this Season of Lent? The answer to this question will be found in the degree that we are convinced of our own need for penance. Let us consider the advice of St. Louis de Montfort in his letter "Friends of the Cross":

"How many of our debts are still unpaid! How many sins have we committed which, despite a sincere confession and heartfelt contrition, will have to be atoned for in purgatory for many years, simply because in this world we contented ourselves with a few slight penances!"

"Ah, let us settle our debts with good grace in this life by cheerfully carrying our cross. In the next life, a strict account is demanded down to the last penny, to the last idle word."

Lent will be what we make it; and this should not be a sad time for us. Our Lord tells us:

"When you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Amen I say

to you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face. That thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father Who is in secret: and thy Father Who seeth in secret, will repay thee." (Matt. 6:16-18)

May we all have a very grace-filled Lenten season. With my prayers and blessing,
Most Rev. Mark A. Pivarunas, CMRI



The Good Shepherd and the Lost Sheep

The Authenticity of St. Mark's Gospel proved by the Dead Sea Scrolls

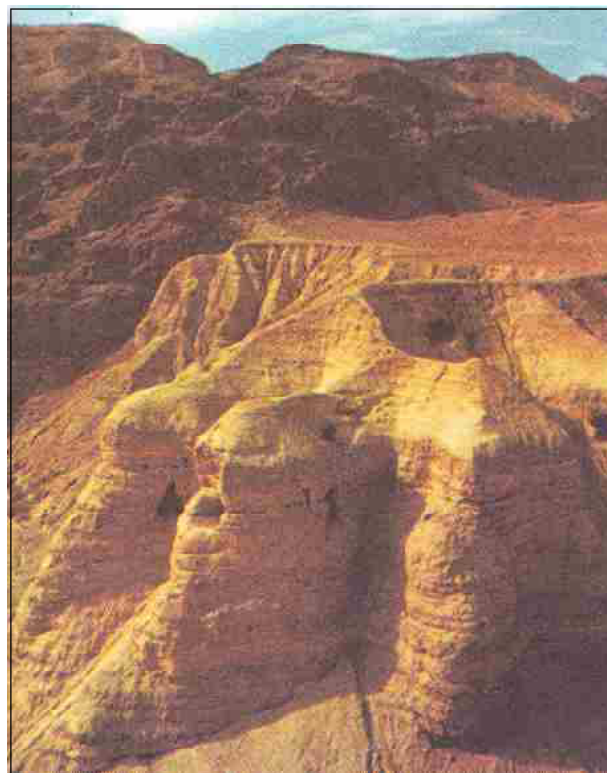
by a seminarian

In this day and age, when the errors of Modernism (which were condemned by Pope St. Pius X) have become so widespread, it is not uncommon to find modern theologians who question the historicity of our gospels. They erroneously claim that our Faith was made up by the early Christians no earlier than about the second or third century. Nevertheless, there is historical evidence which disproves this opinion, and also shows the reality of our Faith and brings the events of the early Church in close proximity. One such scientific proof is the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In 1947 the Bedouins discovered caves near the ruins of the ancient city of Qumran west of the Dead Sea. The original inhabitants of this city seem to have been members of a Jewish sect whose origins date back to the time of the revolt of the Machabees in 166 B.C. With the help of vessels and utensils that were found during a systematic excavation of the caves two years later, scientists were able to determine the time when the place had been deserted. The same type of objects were unearthed in the ruins of Qumran that was destroyed during the time of the Jewish revolt (66-70 A.D.). This revolt caused the destruction of Jerusalem (including the temple) by the Roman Emperor Titus in 70 A.D.—an event predicted by Jesus: “no stone



Copper Scrolls Found at Qumran



***Cave 4 at Qumran in which a wealth of
special scrolls was found***

shall rest upon a stone.” This latter fact could be proved by coins found in the ruins of the city that were dated exactly from the time of Caesar Augustus to that of the Jewish War.

When they had to flee from the Roman conquerors, the members of that community had tried to store away their most valuable things in a safe place. Among these was the library containing scrolls of Old Testament texts such as Deuteronomy, the book of Psalms, the prophet Isaias, the book of Jesus Sirach, and Tobias.

But what's even more interesting is that amongst those old documents were found fragments of St. Paul's first Epistle to Timothy and St. Mark's Gospel. The deciphering of the fragment of St. Mark deserves to be mentioned in a more detailed way. All that it shows are three lines of Greek letters, the third of which consists of a double “vv” (the Greek letters for “nn”). Now there is a double “vv” in Greek in the name for Genesareth. If one takes all places where Genesareth

is mentioned in the New Testament and tries to match it with the letters of the other lines of the fragment, the whole thing fits only for Mark 6:52-53. It is therefore commonly accepted that we really have here a manuscript of St. Mark's Gospel written no later than 70 A.D.

But that is not all. A potsherd in the cave where the fragment was found was stamped with the Semitic characters for "Rome." Besides there are similarities between the fragments from the cave and papyri from Herculaneum in southern Italy. Scientists therefore thought that the Gospel of St. Mark is of Roman provenance. This again proves correct the early Fathers, e.g., Papias (80-160), St. Clement of Alexandria (d.215), and St. Irenaeus (130-202) who tell us that St. Mark wrote his Gospel when the Romans asked him to do so. The reason for this was that St. Peter had left Rome and St. Mark had, as his interpreter, always been with him.

Let us hear St. Clement (quoted by Eusebius in his Church history) "Peter having publicly proclaimed the word in Rome, those present, who were many, in-

vited Mark, who accompanied him and remembered the things that he had said, to set them down in writing"

And Papias says (again quoted by Eusebius): "Mark, Peter's interpreter, wrote with precision the things he remembered, . . . that the Lord had said and done. In fact, he had not heard the Lord nor had he followed him but later, as I have said, he had accompanied Peter. He gave them the teachings according to need, but not as if he were making a systematic collection of the Lord's preachings. So Mark did not make mistakes, having written things as he remembered them."

The discovery to this fragment therefore gives us objective evidence that the gospel of St. Mark predates the destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.) which refutes the modernists' claims that the gospels were produced by the early Christians in the second and the third century.

It also verifies the testimony of the Fathers of the Church in which St. Mark was contemporary with St. Peter, the Apostle and wrote his gospel from the preaching of St. Peter.

The Pope Speaks

The primary grounds for the fostering of vocations is the Catholic home, the place where the parents raise their children with a love for God and for their precious Catholic Faith. The members of the family frequent the sacraments, and a spirit of humility, obedience, love for one another, and discipline prevails. Vocations are fostered at a very young age when parents teach their children, by word and by example, a spirit of generosity and self-sacrifice.

Pope Pius XI *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*:

"But the first and most natural place where the flowers of the sanctuary should almost spontaneously grow and bloom remains almost always the truly and deeply Christian family. Most of the saintly bishops and priests whose "praise the Church declares" (Eccles. 44:15) owe the beginning of their vocation and their holiness to the example and teaching of a father strong in the faith and manly virtues, of a pure,

devoted mother, a family in which the love of God and neighbor, joined with simplicity of life, has reigned supreme."

Catholic parents should remember that no greater blessing can come to their family than to have one of the members called to the religious life or to the holy priesthood. In his encyclical *Sacra Virginitas*, Pope Pius XII exhorted parents to reflect on the great privilege it is for them to have children called by God:

"Let parents consider what a great honor it is to see their son elevated to the priesthood or their daughter consecrate her virginity to her Divine Spouse. In regard to consecrated virgins, the Bishop of Milan (St. Charles Borromeo) writes: 'You have heard, parents, that a virgin is a gift of God, the oblation of parents, the priesthood of chastity. The virgin is a mother's victim, by whose daily sacrifice divine anger is appeased.' "

Father Connell Answers Moral Questions

by Very Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., S.T.D., LL.D., L.H.D.

SURGERY FOR THE HEALTHY

Question: If a person is about to go to a foreign land where medical and hospital care is very difficult to obtain (e.g., a foreign missionary), may he have his appendix removed, even though he has no symptoms of appendicitis, on the score that an attack of this disease in his future abode, where the proper surgical treatment will not be available, will very probably be fatal?

Answer: According to Catholic moral principles, the mutilation or excision of a part of the body is permitted only when there is certainty or probability that benefit will thereby come to the whole body in sufficient measure to compensate for the harm that has been done. (It might be well to note in passing — though it does not relate to the question at hand — that this principal may probably be extended to include benefit to the body of another person. This interpretation is defended by the Rev. B. J. Cunningham, C.M., S.T.D., in *The morality of Organic Transplantation* [Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1944]). If, however, there is not at least a probability that the mutilation or excision is necessary or useful, it is forbidden by the fifth commandment. Accordingly, the question with which we are concerned can be reduced to this: “Is it sufficiently probable that an operation for appendicitis will be necessary or useful at some future time to justify such an operation at present in one who indicates no symptoms of this ailment?”

Doubtless there are theologians who would deny that sufficient probability exists in the case of an apparently healthy person, and who would consequently hold that such an operation is illicit. However, after discussing the matter with competent medical authorities, I have come to the conclusion that there is an argument in favor of the lawfulness of appendectomy on an apparently well person, at least in the circumstances proposed by the questioner. For it seems that about twenty per cent of the people of America require an operation for appendicitis at some time in the course of their lives. Accordingly, if one can regard this proportion as establishing a sufficiently probable opinion that even an apparently healthy individual *now* has a pathological condition of the appendix in an incipient stage so that he will one day find it necessary to submit to this operation, he could admit the lawfulness of the operation here and now — at least if the individual is setting out for a place where good surgical treatment is not available. In view of the fact that there is grave danger of death if one is seized with appendicitis in the circumstances visualized, the probability based on the fact that one in five eventually requires an operation would seem sufficient to justify the operation.

It should be noted that, although the prospect of contracting appendicitis is much less probable than the opposite in the case of a healthy person, an equiprobabilist, as well as a probabilist, could consistently follow the opinion just proposed, since serious danger to health or life is involved. In other words, the question must be viewed, not only from the standpoint of the lawfulness of a mutilating operation, but basically from the standpoint of the obligation to preserve one's health and life, and when this obligation is at stake, per se one must follow the safer side, so that even a much more probable opinion to the contrary (in our case the opinion that one will not contract appendicitis) may not be followed (St. Alphonsus, *Theologia moralis*, I, 42 sq.). From this it might seem to follow that one would even be obliged to have the operation. However, it seems that the operation in question would be an extraordinary means of safeguarding one's health. Now, there is no *obligation* of using an extraordinary means of protecting health and life; but one is *permitted* to use such a means (St. Alphonsus, *Theologia Moralis*, III, n. 372).

Adsum, a publication by the seminarians of **MATER DEI SEMINARY** for the reading enjoyment of friends and benefactors, is sent free of charge to all who request it. If you are interested, please provide your name and mailing address to:

MATER DEI SEMINARY
7745 Military Avenue
Omaha NE 68134-3356