



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,

This month of January has been an extraordinarily busy time for our seminarians. At the end of December, our parish in St. Cloud, Minnesota, Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, acquired a new, larger church in the city of Sartell, which is just 13 minutes north of the old church and three blocks from the Mississippi River. Within a six week period, we purchased the new church and sold the old church, being required to be out of the old church by December 29th. Needless to say, it was a momentous task, not only to make the move, but also to transform the new church into a beautiful Catholic sanctuary—all during the feast of Christmas and its octave! Those seminarians who did not return home for the Christmas break joined Fr. Molina, Fr. Sellner, Brother Mary Xavier, CMRI, the CMD Sisters, and many parishioners in a “marathon” to renovate and decorate the new church in time for the first Mass to



be offered there on January 1st.

On Saturday, January 16th, most of the seminarians traveled to Minnesota to assist at the solemn blessing of the new church and the Solemn Pontifical Mass. Fortunately for the seminarians, the beginning part of the ceremony, which starts outside, was only 15 minutes, because Minnesota temperatures in the winter are very unforgiving when you’re only wearing a cassock and surplice. Following the blessing and Mass, our seminarians had an opportunity to visit with the many parishioners during the reception that followed. Although there is still a great deal of construction work to be accomplished in the sanctuary with new sacristies and side altars, the main altar and the stenciling around the picture of Our Lady provide inspiration for the clergy and laity for the present time. This new church is an answer to many prayers to Our Lady, St. Philomena and St. Joseph. During the sermon for the blessing and the Mass, I reflected that, just as at the wedding feast at Cana, Our Lady said to Jesus, “They have no wine,”



after all the prayers for a larger church, Our Lady heard our prayers and spoke to Jesus, “They have no room.”

Another major project that occurred this month between seminary classes is the installation of new carpet in Mary Immaculate Catholic Church where our seminarians are ordained. After nearly 30 years, our old carpet had seen better days and needed to be replaced. On the feast of Epiphany, after the Solemn High Mass and the blessing of gold, frankincense, myrrh and chalk, all of the pews were removed, the old carpet squares were torn out, and the floor was prepped for the installation of the new carpet the next day.

As always, we are most grateful for yours prayers and support for the seminary, and we reassure you of our daily remembrance of all of you at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

With my prayers and blessing,
Most Rev. Mark A. Pivarunas, CMRI



St. Ambrose's famous discourse "De Virginibus" on the virtues of St. Agnes

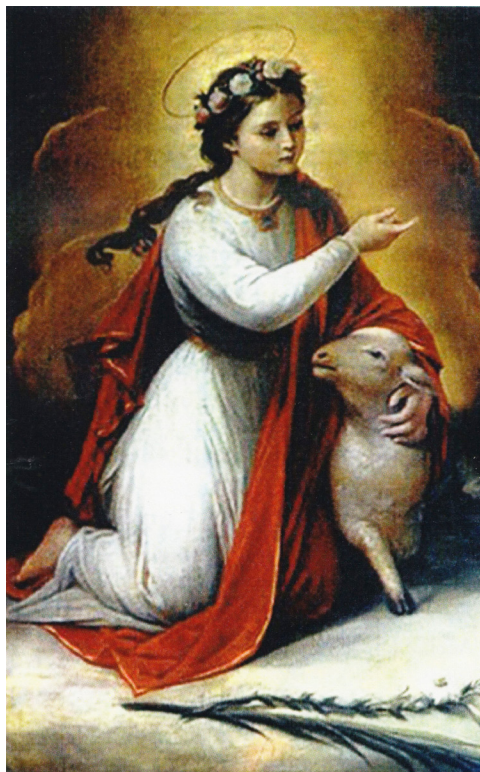
This is a virgin's birthday; let us, then, follow the example of her chastity. It is a martyr's birthday; let us, then, offer sacrifices; it is the birthday of holy Agnes; let men, then, be filled with wonder, little ones with hope, married women with awe, and the unmarried with emulation. But how shall I set forth the glory of her whose very name is an utterance of praise? It seemeth to me that this child, holy beyond her years and courageous beyond human nature, received the name of Agnes, not as an earthly designation, but as a revelation from God of what she was to be. So that this saintly maiden is known by the very title of chastity; and when I have added thereto the word martyr, I have said enough. She needeth not the praise which we could utter, but do not. None is more praiseworthy than she who may be praised by all. As many as name her, so many exalt her by the noble title of martyr.

We learn by tradition that this holy martyr testified in the thirteenth year of her age. We will pass by the foul cruelty which did not spare her tender years, to contemplate the great power of her faith whereby she overcame the weakness of childhood and witnessed a good confession. Her little body was hardly big enough to leave room for a sword thrust.

Place for the sword she had not, but what she had was a courage which could conquer the sword. She had no fear when she found herself grasped by the bloody hands of the executioners. She was unmoved when they dragged her with clanking chains. Hardly entered on life, she stood fully prepared to die. She quailed not when the weapons of the angry soldiers were pointed at her breast. If they forced her against her will to approach the altars of devils, she could stretch forth her hands to Christ amidst the very flames which consumed the idolatrous offerings, and trace over the heathen shrine the victorious Cross of the Lord. She was ready to submit her neck and hands to the iron shackles, but they were too big to clasp her slender limbs. Behold a strange martyr! She was not of age to be punished, but

yet she was ripe for the triumph; she was too weak to run in the race, but yet she was entitled to the prize; unable from her years to be aught but a learner, she is found none the less to be a teacher.

She went to the place of execution a virgin, with more willing and joyful footsteps than she would have gone with to the nuptial chamber as a bride. Her hair was not trimly braided and coiled, for the spouse she sought to please was Christ. She was decked not with flowers but with virtues. The spectators were all in



tears, but she alone did not weep. They beheld her with wonder laying down the life of which she had hardly begun to taste the sweets, as freely as though she had drained it to the dregs and was weary of its burden. All men were amazed when they saw her who was not yet her own mistress or of age to testify, nevertheless bearing witness to the Most High. Though her testimony was inadmissible, if she spoke of man, she was credited concerning God, for that which is above nature can only come from the author of nature. Consider how many threats the executioner used to excite her fears, how many promises to win her compliance, how many suitors were present who were eager to claim her

as a bride. But she answered: "It is an insult to my Betrothed to expect that I could favor any other. He that first chose me, His will I be. Executioner, why waitest thou? Perish the body which draweth the admiration of eyes from which I shrink." She stood, prayed, and then bent her neck for the stroke. Now mightest thou have seen the executioner trembling as though he himself were under sentence of death, thou mightest have seen his right hand quiver and his face grow pale at the thought of her doom, while the maiden alone stood undismayed. Here, then, you see that this one victim rendered to God a double testimony, that of her purity and that of her faith. She surrendered not her virginity and she achieved martyrdom.

Outlines of Moral Theology

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

OATHS

An oath is the calling on God to witness the truth of a statement. To make an oath validly, a person must have the intention of doing so, and use some manner of formula — e.g., “So help me God,” the kissing of the Bible, etc. The statement: “God knows I am speaking the truth,” is not a sufficient formula.

An oath is *assertive* if it is intended to confirm the truthfulness of a statement regarding the past or the present — e.g., an oath taken by a witness at a trial. An oath is *promissory* if it is intended to confirm the truthfulness of a promise to do something in the future. It should be noted that such an oath does not directly regard the fulfillment of the deed that is promised, but the sincerity of the promise *at present*.

Three conditions are required for the lawfulness of an oath — truthfulness, prudence, and justice. The first means that the person sincerely believes in the truth of what he is asserting or is sincere in his intention of doing what is promised. If this condition is lacking, a person is guilty of grave sin of perjury, even though the falsehood is of little consequence. Prudence means that there is sufficient reason for taking an oath. One who would take an oath regarding a matter of little or no consequence would sin by irreverence; but it would be a venial sin only, if he is speaking the truth. The third quality means that a person has a right to say what he is declaring under oath. For example, it would be a sin to confirm detraction by an oath. But, again, the lack of this quality (presuming the statement to be true) is usually only a venial sin against religion, even though the detraction itself is gravely wrong as an act of injustice.

A person may confirm a mental restriction by an oath, when there is sufficient reason for doing so; but a graver reason is required than when one makes such a statement without an oath. Even in a trial, one could do this if the judge exceeded his authority in asking a question — for example, regarding the seal of the confessional.

A person who fails to fulfill a promissory oath sins, either gravely or lightly, in accordance with the gravity of the matter involved. The violation of such an oath is not perjury (which regards only the *truthfulness* of the statement when the oath was made) but is a sin against religion. An oath to do something sinful is invalid, and it is sinful to make such an oath. If the thing promised is gravely sinful, it is a mortal sin to take the oath; if it is venially sinful, it is disputed by theologians whether the oath is a mortal or a venial sin.

The obligation of an oath ceases in the same way as that of a vow—either intrinsically (by a substantial change of circumstance), or extrinsically by annulment, dispensation, or commutation. The same persons who can annul or dispense from a vow have the same power regarding a promissory oath; but if the dispensation would tend to the prejudice of others who refuse to remit the obligation, only the Holy See can dispense from the oath on account of the necessity or utility of the Church.

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