

Adsum

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LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

This month's seminary newsletter begins with a special request for prayers for one of our traditional Catholic families in Michigan—the Isaac Martin family. This past Sunday, November 10th, the Martin family had just left Holy Mass when they were involved in a tragic car accident, which took the life of Alexa Martin, who was seven months pregnant, and her two year old daughter Zelig. Alexa was a devout Catholic, wife and mother, and, as her pastor Fr. Joseph Appelhanz remarked, if anyone was ready to have a holy death, Alexa was certainly the one. Please continue to pray for Isaac and his eight remaining children.

This past month Fr. Ephrem Cordova, CMRI underwent brain surgery to correct chronic issues that he has dealt with for 24 years since he suffered from a cavernous malformation that caused a bleed stroke. Almighty God in His Divine Providence has provided a surgeon specializing in this particular surgery. Father is making a remarkable recovery and is most hopeful to be able to return to his priestly duties as pastor of his church Queen of the Most Holy Rosary in Phoenix,

Arizona.

As I reflect over the 35 years of Mater Dei Seminary, one thought that frequently comes to mind is the importance of Catholic education to foster priestly and religious vocations. The vocations of many of our priests and religious have had their origin in our Catholic schools. The good example of the spirit of faith, charity and self sacrifice from the priests and religious who maintain our schools have inspired the hearts of the young souls entrusted to their spiritual care. His Holiness Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical on the Christian education of youth, stressed the importance of this work; our youth are the future of the Church. How critical it is to lay a solid spiritual foundation in our youth. It is for this reason that in the past few years the establishment of Catholic schools around the country has been a top priority of mine.

Nevertheless, we must heed the exhortation of Our Lord and pray the Lord of the harvest that He send laborers into His harvest.

Please remember our seminarians who will be advancing in the month of December to the Major and Minor Orders.

With my prayers and blessing,

Most Rev. Mark A. Pivarunas, CMRI



Mater Dei Academy faculty and students

The Dedication of St. Peter's Basilica — November 18th

from Pilgrim Walks in Rome by P. J. Chandley, SJ

St. Leo the Great, preaching at St. Peter's tomb on the Saint's feast about AD 440, speaks as follows:

"The spot which has been glorified by the death of the chiefs of the Apostles, should have the chief place of joy on the (anniversary) day of their martyrdom. For these, O Rome, are the men through whom the light of Christ's Gospel shone upon thee, when she, who was the mistress of error, became the disciple of truth. They are the holy Fathers and true Pastors, having with better and happier omens founded thee for a place in the heavenly kingdom, than those who laid the first stones of thy walls, of whom the one, who gave thee thy name, stained thee with his brother's blood. They it is who have raised thee to this height of glory, that being made by the sacred See of Peter, the head of the world, as a holy people, a chosen nation, a priestly and royal city, thy rule might be wider spread through a divine religion than an earthly domination. Because far as, crowned with many victories, thou hast stretched thy empire by land and sea, the strife of war has gained thee a smaller realm than has the peace of Christ."

That St. Peter came to Rome and there established his Apostolic See, sealing his faith with the shedding of his blood, is an historical fact handed down in the tradition of the Church, and fully treated under the question of his primacy in works on dogmatic theology. The Vatican Council, AD 1870, declares that the Roman See was founded by St. Peter and consecrated with his blood. No

Catholic is free to question this truth.

It will be sufficient here to refer briefly to the chief authorities quoted by theologians in support of this tradition.

1. The Councils of Arles (314), of Nice (325), of Ephesus (431), the Chalcedon (451), of the Vatican (1870).

2. The Fathers of the Church, e.g., St. Clement (96), St. Ignatius of Antioch (107), Papias (120), Clement of Alexandria (217), St. Irenaeus (202), Tertullian (245), Origen (254), Firmilian (256),

Eusebius (315), St. Optatus (375), St. Jerome (390), St. Augustine (429).

In the year 64, Nero set fire to Rome, partly out of a spirit of fiendish mischief, partly from a wish to rebuild it on a scale of greater magnificence; being alarmed at the storm of popular excitement, in his wish to

screen himself from suspicion, he charged the Christians with the crime. Such was the origin of the persecution. The poor Christians were arrested in great numbers, and suffered by terrible and hitherto unheard of forms of death. They were sewn up in the skins of beasts and exposed to wild dogs to be torn to pieces; they were wrapped in garments saturated with pitch, and then hung up on lofty gallows and set fire to in the dusk of the evening. Their remains, buried in the grottoes of the Vatican hill, lie somewhere near St. Peter's tomb, and their triumph is commemorated in the Roman martyrology on June 24.

Ss. Peter and Paul suffered martyrdom in this



same persecution on the same day, June 29th, and in the same year, 67 AD.

It is stated in the Liber Pontificalis, written by Anastasius Bibliothecarius in the eighth century, that the Emperor Constantine after his miraculous conversion caused the body of St. Peter to be exhumed in the presence of Pope St. Sylvester, and enshrined in a case of silver enclosed within a sarcophagus of Cyprian brass. Over this he placed a large cross of gold weighing one hundred and fifty pounds, and bearing the inscription: "*Constantinus Aug. et Helena aug. hanc domum regalem [auro decorant quam] simili fulgore coruscans aula circumdat.*" The body was then restored to its original tomb,

over which he erected an altar and a vaulted chamber (in place of St. Anacletus' memoria) faced interiorly with plates of gold. This chamber was, and still is, right under the high altar of St. Peter's basilica, and on the



Apostle's tomb still lies the cross of gold, as will be shown later.

In front of the tomb the Emperor placed four immense candelabra of brass, each weighing three hundred pounds, with silver lamps, where lights were kept constantly burning; and right over the tomb he hung a golden lamp weighing thirty-five pounds. The altar over the tomb he covered with plates of gold and silver studded jewels.

Old St. Peter's had lasted some 1126 years (i.e., from AD 324 to 1450), when the walls began to settle down on the side where the masonry of Nero's circus had been retained.

Lanciani says the destruction of this venerable basilica is "one of the saddest events in the history

of the ruin of Rome," yet it was considered a necessity, for in Nicholas V's time (1447—1455) the structure was found to be in a damaged state, and the roof threatened to fall. He conceived the idea of entirely rebuilding it, but did little or nothing because of the sums required. Pope Benedict XII (1334—1342) had spent 80,000 gold florins (i.e., some 480,000 pounds of our money) in repairing the roof; but a century later it was found to be again unsafe, thousands of rats having made holes in the beams, and the southern wall was leaning three feet seven inches to the side, so that the pilgrims, who came to the Jubilee of 1450, were naturally alarmed.

The work of destruction and of reconstruction

planned by Nicholas V had to be postponed for half a century on account of the difficulties of the times.

Julius II (1503—1513), elected Pope in 1503 at the age of 60, at once resolved to carry out Nicholas'

design. The Cardinals, when consulted, were opposed to the project on the grounds of the difficulties of the times, of the tremendous cost of such an undertaking, and of the danger to the faith and devotion of thousands incurred by the removal, and in some cases, probable loss of so many precious memorials and sacred relics of past ages. But Julius was resolute, and in February, 1506, the operations commenced.

In 1626, Urban VIII solemnly consecrated the basilica on November 18.

"St. Peter's was built at a period when architecture was in a transition state, when the classical ideal and the Gothic influence were warring against each other."

Fr. Connell Answers Moral Questions

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

MISSING SUNDAY MASS FOR VACATION

Question: What is to be said about Catholics who miss Mass on Sunday because they have gone into the lake region or the woods for the purpose of hunting, fishing, etc, over the weekend?

Answer: It is a deplorable fact that in recent years the sin of missing Mass on Sunday has become more common among Catholics in the United States. Priests should recognize the danger to the Faith inevitably connected with this custom, and strive to avert it by impressing our people with the importance of Sunday Mass in Catholic life. It is true, there can be legitimate reasons excusing a Catholic from the obligation of attending Mass on Sunday; but these reasons should not be inordinately extended. The motive of recreation is an example of a reason that may be stretched too far. It is held by reliable theologians that if a person can obtain needed recreation only in a section of the country where there is no church or only in circumstances in which he cannot hear Mass, he can be justified in taking his recreation in this place or in these circumstances and thereby missing Mass *once or twice*, or at most *a few times a year*. However, Catholics should be told that this concession may not be used except when there is considerable difficulty in getting to Mass from the place of recreation, and that it may be used only rarely (*once or twice a year*, according to Fanfani; *a few times* according to Konings). In these days of automobiles and motorboats, Catholics can generally get to Mass even from remote parts of the woods and the lake regions. Certainly, a person would not be excused from attending Mass merely because the journey to church would take an hour by car. And a Catholic can make use of recreation as an excusing cause only when he cannot find the needed recreation in a place where he can get to Mass on Sundays.

LEGISLATIVE PROBLEMS

To come to particular points of legislation: The Catholic legislator may not approve of any measure opposed to the natural law. An example of this would be legislation authorizing the establishment of birth-control clinics or the spreading of information helpful to contraception. The same principle would hold regarding proposed measures to prescribe or permit "eugenic" sterilization, or to legalize what is known as "therapeutic" abortion. In casting their votes against such proposals, Catholic legislators need have no fear that they are imposing distinctively Catholic tenets on their fellow citizens. They are simply condemning violations of the natural law, which is binding on all men without exception, irrespective of their religious beliefs.

Generally speaking, the same principle would apply to any legislation permitting people to obtain a divorce and marry again; for such a separation of husband and wife is a transgression of the natural law. However, an exception might be made in laying down this rule. In the near future our legislators may be confronted with a proposal to establish a uniform code of divorce laws throughout the country. In the supposition that such a code would definitely diminish the number of divorces in our land, it would seem that a Catholic legislator might vote for it to be substituted for the present lax laws, on the principle that one may advocate the lesser of two moral evils, when one of the two is sure to ensue.

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