

The Remnant

(Est. in 1967)

“... At the present time there is a remnant left, selected out of grace.” - Romans 11:5



A National Catholic Bi-Weekly based in St. Paul, Minnesota USA

December 31, AD 2014
Volume 47, Number 22

From the Editor's Desk...

A Remaining Christmas

by Michael J. Matt

As the enemies of Christ our King continue to carry on old Herod's mad assault on all that is innocent and Christlike in our world, even Christmas itself, it must surely remain a source of vexation for them to realize that despite the best efforts of their global anti-Christian war machine, a little Child continues to conquer them century after century. For 2,000 years they've been at it, and yet even today He reigns throughout the world in the hearts of the countless millions who still believe in the real meaning of Christmas. The old Faith will never die and Herod's legions will go on busying themselves terrorizing children but always and forever ultimately failing in their campaign to destroy one, tiny Baby.

Just hours before press time this week, I received an email from a war veteran and Remnant reader who had served 13 years in the U.S. Army, including Vietnam in 1971 and 72. His name is Bob Baker and he wanted to know if I'd be interested in printing his story of a Christmas Eve Midnight Mass he'd attended in the middle of the Vietnam War. After reading it, I immediately set to work making the necessary layout adjustments needed to feature this beautiful and inspiring story here in our Christmas issue.

Mr. Baker's account reminds us anew that no matter how many wars tear apart the cities of the world, in the end those that love the Child of Bethlehem will survive so long as we continue to believe and so long as we never lose hope. A merry Christmas to all and a happy and holy New Year to all the friends and allies of The Remnant. Keep the old Faith. **MJM**

~ See *Watching*/ Page 2



By Hilaire Belloc

The world is changing very fast, and neither exactly for the better or the worse, but for division. Our civilization is splitting more and more into two camps, and what was common to the whole of it is becoming restricted to the Christian, and soon will be restricted to the Catholic half.

That is why I have called this article 'A Remaining Christmas'. People ask themselves how much remains of this observance and of the feast and its customs. Now a concrete instance

is more vivid and, in its own way, of more value than a general appreciation. So I will set down here exactly what Christmas still is in a certain house in England, how it is observed, and all the domestic rites accompanying it in their detail and warmth.

This house stands low down upon clay near a little river. It is quite cut off from the towns; no one has built near it. Every cottage for a mile and more is old, with here and there a modern addition. The church of the parish (which was lost of course three and a half centuries

ago, under Elizabeth) is as old as the Crusades. It is of the twelfth century. The house of which I speak is in its oldest parts of the fourteenth century at least, and perhaps earlier, but there are modern additions. One wing of it was built seventy years ago at the south end of the house, another at the north end, twenty years ago. Yet the tradition is so strong that you would not tell from the outside, and hardly from the inside, which part is old and which part is new. For, indeed, the old part itself grew up gradually, and the eleven gables of the house show up against the sky as though they were of one age, though in truth they are of every age down along all these 500 years and more.

The central upper room of the house is the chapel where Mass is said, and there one sees, uncovered by any wall of plaster or brick, the original structure of the house, which is of vast oaken beams, the main supports and transverses pieces half a yard across, morticed strongly into each other centuries, and smoothed roughly with the adze. They are black with the years. The roof soars up like a high-pitched tent, and is supported by a whole fan of lesser curved oaken beams. There is but one window behind the altar. Indeed, the whole house is thus in its structure of the local and native oak, and the brick walls of it are only curtains built in between the wooden framework of that most ancient habitation.

Beneath the chapel is the dining room, where there is a very large open hearth which can take huge logs and which is as old as anything in the place. Here wood only is burnt, and that wood oak.

~ See *Remaining*/Page 7

Tidings of Comfort and Joy

By Timothy J Cullen

*"Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace..."*

The lyrics of the well-loved Christmas carol "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen" seem particularly apt for this Christmas Season of 2014, A.D. The carol is now viewed as traditional, but was in fact referred to as a "new" carol in a London publication circa 1760 and may have been sung as early as the fifteenth century,¹ predating the

¹ <http://www.sharefaith.com/guide/Christian-Holidays/holiday-songs/god-rest-ye-merry-gentlemen-the-song-and-the-story.html>

Protestant Reformation that began in the sixteenth, although the carol itself was penned by an unknown composer in the English vernacular as opposed to Latin.

The refrain "Oh tidings of comfort and joy/Comfort and joy/Oh tidings of comfort and joy" was once sung by nearly every English speaking schoolchild and is likely among the best-remembered refrains of Christmastide to this day. And while for the traditional Catholic, recent tidings within the Church have brought little comfort and less joy, Christmastide provides the perfect opportunity to take time out from the fray and "with true love and brotherhood each other now embrace".

No season of the year touches the heart "with tidings of comfort and joy" as does Christmastide. Eastertide is glorious, but Christmastide...

This Christmas, this writer has the blessing of his firstborn grandchild born during Lent of this year on the first full day of spring. Naturally enough, the Advent Calendar must be kept out of his reach (as must be nearly everything else!), and, naturally enough, he is still too young to understand the significance of the calendar, of the crèche, of the tree (enclosed in a protective circle) and trimmings, of the lyrics of the carols and *villancicos* (Spanish-language

~ See *Comfort and Joy*/Page 5

A Christmas Eve, Watching

By Bob Baker

It didn't do any good to complain and it wasn't as if there was much else to do. Though I'd been in-country for almost four months, I still had less time there than most, so the job was mine – I had complete charge of our small compound for Christmas Eve, 1971 in Da Nang, Republic of Vietnam.

I knew what was going to happen – all of us, so far from home and homesick, everyone would drink a little (!) too much. I also knew if the Viet Cong decided to hit the wire on this night, there would be few who could be counted on to offer any kind of serious resistance. I didn't think it might happen, but the enemy's "word" could never be counted on or trusted, even though they had agreed to a 24-hour Christmas cease-fire. I always wondered about this: How does one contact a terrorist organization and agree to something like a cease-fire? How do they, in turn, tell their units across the country, by radio or phone call? Seems very odd, doesn't it?

I caught the deuce-and-a-half for chow – the MACV and CIA compounds weren't too far away. If the Viet Cong did, in fact, do something, help would come from MACV, not the CIA. CIA never even responded to communications checks for their own safety. You would never know if they really existed but for their silver Huey helicopter, their Bushmaster aircraft on Da Nang airfield and the locals who would readily tell you where their compound was located, if asked.

After chow, I returned and took over "official" control of our little installation

of 4-5 very small buildings - typing the first official entry onto the log sheet.

It was then time to make the rounds. We had two Vietnamese guards – one at the only entryway into the "complex" and one on the roof, next to our water tower. Neither seemed to speak English well, but no one knew for sure. I knew they both had a couple of clips for their M-1 carbines. So between their carbines and my M-16 and a bandolier of ammo, we could probably hold off a regiment or division or so. If you believe that, I have a bridge to sell cheap.

It was fairly quiet, though I knew it wouldn't be long before it was likely to become noisier; the usual game of "combat basketball" had already begun. I just hoped that no one would be seriously hurt – not due for any great humanitarian reason, but because there were no rules in this game. Punching someone jumping to make a shot was normal. The real reason for my concern was if someone was really hurt, then it was paperwork and finding someone to make the trip to the 95th EVAC, across the river, and back. It would be nearly impossible to find someone sober enough to drive a jeep soon.

Virtually every night there was a movie and this night was no exception. Only about half of the guys were in attendance – everyone else was at the meeting/recreation room – a room with a few chairs, tables and a very small bar.

Overhearing talk of home, girlfriends, wives and kids, it didn't take long to figure out how this night was going to be. This would certainly confirm the expression, "Crying in your beer." It was time to move on. Moving through the area, I eventually stopped at the roof. Acknowledging my presence, the guard nodded and I did the same. This was always the procedure with both guards – few words were ever mentioned.

The view was at least better than nothing – if you craned your head over one way, you could just make out the water of the bay. A little to the left was the QC (Vietnamese Military Police) compound, which you couldn't see into. In every other direction were ramshackled houses, made of wood scrounged from who knows where and corrugated tin roofs.

After a few weeks of being in-country, you didn't notice the mosquitoes and the distinct smells that are Viet Nam. When I first arrived and began exiting the airplane's stairs to the tarmac, as I reached the plane's door, the smell made me stop immediately and by the time I reached the pavement, I thought every mosquito in the world had bitten me, bite-upon-bite!

None of this was noticed now, after almost four months, little seemed to change except for the degree of fear at any given time and that usually depended on where you were and what you were doing, but not always. Most times, it was the sound of someone firing a weapon, whether a M-16 or an AK-47. Reaction was immediate if your trained ear determined it was close. If the distance was more than local, you kept note of it, especially if you were headed in that direction. You became wary of everyone but Americans. Even kids were almost feared because of

the instances where they were used to deliver grenades and babies were booby trapped. Sometimes it felt like you were always coiled up, ready to spring at a second's notice for your own safety and the safety of your guys.

It was peaceful on the roof. I sat and just looked around and thought of nothing. Odd as it may seem, just "clicking" your brain into neutral can be very beneficial and relaxing. After a few minutes, it was time to go. A quick nod to the guard, slinging my ever-present M-16 behind a shoulder and back down I went. One more stop - our CONEX container, which contained the teletype, all the crypto gear and its army operator. As the CONEX was air-conditioned due to the equipment, you rarely saw whoever was inside unless you had the duty.

A quick knock on the door and a blast of air-conditioned comfort hit you in the face and sent a chill throughout your body. This was really only a courtesy call, so whoever had the duty inside the CONEX would know who had the duty for everything else. A brief exchange of pleasantries and complaints and the door closed once again. Back to where it had all began. The typewriter beckoned: the second entry became, "All posts checked. All secure." And the time led off the entry in the log.

A quick look at the radio next to the desk to see if the correct frequency was dialed-in and a flip of the switch to make sure it had power and then it was switched off until it was time for the communication (comm) checks in a few hours. I decided to try to read the book I had been trying to get through. I was able to read for a half-hour or so, stopping every now and then to hear a somewhat louder bunch of guys as darkness fell, halting the basketball game. This small group made its way to the movie or the bar, adding a perceptible change in the overall volume.

All of this generally repeated itself over the next few hours, changed only by the movie ending and almost everyone now in the bar. I discovered in making a later, hourly round that the bar area was jammed, as I tactfully declined a drink from many of the guys.

Completing my rounds, I returned to my office, typed in the log, checked the radio and was about to re-start my book when one of the guys poked his head in and asked if I intended to go to Midnight Mass. I explained that I had the duty, but he replied that, if I was interested, he'd find someone to fill in for an hour or so. I said sure, but it can't be a drunk though. He understood. There was about an hour and a half before it would be time to go, enough for a quick round in an hour. Varying times was standard procedure anyway.

I then made a comm check. Having had the duty a few times before, I knew what was going to happen – nothing. Trying to contact our headquarters in Saigon and the CIA compound down the street had always been unsuccessful for everyone.

About 20 minutes before Mass was to begin, my friend returned and had the First Sergeant in tow. My surprise was obvious, as the top kick told me to return ASAP.



Bob Baker, Vietnam

We jumped in the jeep, both of us armed with our M-16s, waited for the compound gate guard to open things up and then I flew down the road as fast as I could. As it was almost midnight and we were virtually alone on the street, we stuck out like a sore thumb as a target for anyone. (The first time I was fired on was driving a jeep after being in-country for three days – by now Parnelli Jones and Jackie Stewart had nothing on me.)

Arriving at the MACV compound and surprising the guard, who obviously wasn't expecting visitors, we were let in. A quick right and the small, little chapel was in front of us. There was a rifle rack for weapons just before you entered and a bunch of plastic rosaries just inside the entryway.

The High Mass started exactly on-time – Latin hadn't yet surrendered to English.

The chapel, being small, captured the incense and retained it as almost a fog that lingered in the air. The words majestic, their emphasis succinct and clear. Both of the soldier altar servers seemed to be as one with each other and the priest, the responses and every note of music. It was awe-inspiring and one I shall never forget.

The time seemed to slip by and then it was done. Not over, just done for it remained vividly imprinted in memory and in what was soon to come. Returning in the same way and in the same manner in which we had come, the top kick seemed irked and before he could speak, I gave him my thanks for allowing us to attend High Mass. At this, there was a softening in his expression and a look of understanding, to which he merely wished us Merry Christmas and moved off to his rack. I suspected he was probably Catholic, which I later found out to be true.

My friend bade me goodnight and I did the same, adding my appreciation to his having set up a replacement to be able to go the Mass. Looking at the log, there was nothing entered, so I walked my rounds once again.

Things were still rowdy, but not as much as I thought it might be. I suspected the first sergeant had laid down a few "suggestions" to the rowdier ones. There was no one who could have passed a breathalyzer test and it was obvious something had to be done, so I turned away and yelled "Last call" in the best first sergeant voice I could.

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Est. in 1967

A Catholic Fortnightly
Published 22 times per year

Editor/Publisher

Michael J. Matt

The Remnant (ISSN # 0274-9726. U.S.P.S.# 606840) is published semi-monthly (monthly in January and July) 22 times per year by The Remnant, Inc. Periodicals Postage paid at Forest Lake, MN and additional entry offices. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to The Remnant at P.O. Box 1117, Forest Lake, MN 55025. (Telephone: 651-433-5425)

Subscription Pricing

Standard U.S.: **Print \$35**

Canada: **Print Edition \$40**

Foreign (Outside US & Canada): **\$55**

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Single Copy Price: **\$1.50**

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Custer's Last Stand

Editor, The Remnant: Rejoice and take heart, fellow traddies! Jorge Bergoglio and his gang are the aging hippies of the post-conciliar Church. Like Custer, they're making their last stand against a sea of irrelevance. Merry Christmas!

Scila Hudson
Virginia Beach

Freedom of the Press?

Editor, *The Remnant*: With the Obama Administration actively supporting racial street rioters in various forms (as a supposed exercise of Constitutional rights), is Martial Law the next step in aborting the true meaning of the First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press? As President Obama (a former professor of Constitutional Law at Rockefeller's University of Chicago) should know, freedom of speech does not include a right to occupy public streets, converting them to a gang kangaroo court, seeking to reverse lawful decisions of Grand Juries, dressed-up as supposed racial "social justice". Misuse of Martial Law was seen in various incidents of the Civil War of 1860's, and both World Wars (1917 & 1941). Yes, history can repeat when sentinels are found asleep on watch.

A Christmas Eve, Watching

Continued...

It seemed to work as the majority seemed headed for the door. It looked like my job would be easy – after most went staggering away and a few stopping to be sick, there only remained a handful of older soldiers who waved to me as if to say they'd be leaving soon.

Waving back, I had to help a few guys into their racks and the snoring could already be heard. It would soon become outrageously loud. It couldn't be helped – they'd all have a huge headache in the morning.

I continued to make what had become a long walk around. I had heard some weapon rounds go off in the distance on the way back from Mass and sporadically since. On top of the roof, I heard some again and could see tracers in the distance, too. The tracers arched up from the ground, so there was still some celebrating going on somewhere. In noticing the guard was awake, I wished him a Merry Christmas. Expecting no response, he seemed to know what I said as he greeted me in the same way, in Vietnamese. I reached over and shook his hand and left to finish my rounds that had taken almost an hour to complete.

The last comm check made – this time wishing them a Merry Christmas, too – with not a peep in return. The log typed, I sat back and wondered at all that had happened in the past few hours. The sadness of those far from home, expressed itself it drinking so they could forget home and all it represented. No one I ever encountered desired to be there then or ever said they wanted to return after the war was over. By now, it was after 0300 and the stillness

of the night was fully laden on all things. "Sleep, perchance to dream," I remember thinking. There would be many across the world that were still abed while I was here awake. Funny but I wasn't tired, not yet at least. So another round I went. No changes from the last time, though quieter. Every once in a while now, an explosive device could be heard far away – probably a flare just to make sure the Viet Cong weren't sleepwalking up to the wire somewhere.

Eventually, it seems possible that The Remnant may be deposed to this FEDERAL DICTATION, with denial of Freedom of the Press being the result. Oh come now, is this just another theory of conspiracy, peddled about by little old ladies in tennis shoes? Well, let us hope so. But just in case of the worst outcome, let us take a quick look at one Catholic case involving suppression of speech and press—the case of the famous Radio Priest of the 1930's, and publisher of the "Social Justice" newspaper of Royal Oak, Michigan, Rev. Fr. Charles E. Coughlin (1891-1979), pastor of the imposing Shrine of the Little Flower, in the Archdiocese of Detroit. Social Justice for the working man as his political and religious mission, Father Coughlin began his

Making the roof, acknowledging the guard, I sat for a while, thinking about nothing. Putting my hand in my shirt pocket, I felt the rosary I had taken while at Mass.

Fingering it, I began whispering the Rosary. As I did so, my voice must have grown louder as the guard, who I had wished Merry Christmas to, began to recite the Rosary in Vietnamese. I became aware of it and started reciting it normally, but slower so the guard (about 20 feet away) and I could stay in sync with each other.

As we neared the end of a decade of the Rosary, a flare lit the sky many miles away and I couldn't help but think of the heavenly star the Three Wise Men followed to see the "babe in swaddling clothes."

I sat for another few minutes thinking of all that had happened, wondering about God's plans for this warring country, the conflict occurring in the streets of the United States, my friends fast asleep and myself. I said a prayer for all of these that all things would be healed and that all would find the peace we all wanted and desperately needed. ■

weekly radio program with millions of listeners, and with the firm support of his archbishop, Most Rev. Michael Gallagher.

With initial support of President Franklin Roosevelt's social reforms, all went well—until Father began opposing the Roosevelt programs and identifying Jewish control of Wall Street. Thus he was immediately falsely accused of "anti-Semitism" (defined as any opposition to Judaic objectives), banned for a short time, then restored to the airwaves at his own expense.

As World War II began, Fr. Coughlin was seen as an "isolationist", opposing Roosevelt's anxious efforts against the Congressional Neutrality Act. By 1940 Fr. Coughlin was considered a political nuisance to be silenced.

The Roosevelt Administration began a campaign in April 1942 to silence him. U.S. Attorney General Francis Biddle urged Postmaster General Frank Walker to revoke Second Class mailing privileges for Fr. Coughlin's Social Justice newspaper, and at the same time pressure was placed on the new Archbishop of Detroit, Most Rev. Edward Mooney to end Fr. Coughlin's public political career, which was accomplished with Fr. Coughlin's resignation in May 1942. Fr. Coughlin remained as pastor of the Shrine of the Little Flower until he retired in 1966; he died in 1979, age 88, may his soul rest in the peace of Our Lord.

The object of this tale is to realize the present danger to valiant editors of Traditionalist newspapers, such as The Remnant, and several other defenders of the faith. May the Holy Spirit protect us from the wiles of the fallen archangel Lucifer. Beware of those who would betray us.

Robert Dahl
Port Deposit, MD

Keep It Up!

Editor, *The Remnant*: Enclosed please find a check to renew my subscription. Please keep up the good work and the good articles, especially the ones that tackle controversial and most likely unpopular subjects. I have 'Liked' your Facebook page, so I get your daily FB postings as well.

I am with the Society of Saint Pius X here in California. I've always felt your paper was fair regarding the Society, and basically supportive. After all, we are all traditional Catholics, aren't we? But there is so much division, even among the traditionalists, and even at my little parish. My prayer these days is to increase the number of traditional faithful in all the traditional chapels throughout the world, and to grant perseverance and guidance of the Holy Ghost for all the traditional faithful. Of course, I pray for the SSPX every day with every rosary, too.

Our pastor was especially critical of the article regarding the idea that we have two Popes governing the church today. He says—only one Pope, always. But—I pray for both living Popes by name every day in my rosary. Your articles open up a different and wider



way of thinking about issues affecting the Catholic Church and especially traditional Catholicism with each issue. Keep up the good work. Sincerely yours in Christ,

Patricia Bridges
Highland, CA

Learning to Offer the Old Latin Mass

Editor, *The Remnant*: I used to subscribe to *The Remnant* but somehow through my moves from here to there I lost my subscription renewal. Now more than ever we need your newspaper and ministry of truth in the Church. So I am sending money for a subscription and a few extra dollars to support your work.

The recent Synod of the Bishops is of the gravest concern. It sounds like they are moving towards approval of the behavior that was at the heart of the priestly scandals. Are they aware that not even the Pope can change the ancient teachings of the Church on Faith and Morals? Where do they find anything in Scripture or the Magisterium that support his proposed changes.

My first fears about Pope Francis came with his early remarks. When he said that the Church speaks about abortion too much it was a slap in the face to all of those saintly and heroic

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Letters to the Editor Cont...

Catholics who have prayed in front of abortion clinics, have helped thousands of pregnant mothers and have worked tirelessly to give unborn children the very best of legal protections at great personal, social and financial sacrifice. We talk about abortion because over 1,400 babies a day are being slaughtered inside and outside of the womb in the USA alone. This does not even consider abortions from pills and devices.

When he said, "Who am I to judge?," about homosexual priests I wanted to scream at him, "You're the Pope!" If the Pope cannot give moral and spiritual guidance to someone who is trapped in grave sin, who else will?

Like most bishops, priests, deacons and lay faithful Pope Francis does not realize that the problems with the Church are liturgical. It appears that after four decades of a Protestant liturgy with a valid Eucharist the Church may become weakened by adopting the ways of the world.

We may be getting near the time to head to the mountains! I am attempting to learn how to say the Mass of the Council of Trent (I refuse to call it "the extraordinary form") but I have had no success yet. My previous minister provincial did not want me to get involved with "fringe groups". One friar said he didn't want to be involved with "persons who want to go back to yesteryear". My thought was that many of the young people who attend the Latin Mass do not even know what yesteryear was like.

Our recent provincial chapter passed a resolution that says a pastor may not put a Latin Mass into the schedule without the approval of the minister provincial because it will affect future assignments. I believe that this proposal violates if not by letter certainly the spirit of Pope Benedict's apostolic letter.

In any event, now more than ever must we pray and sacrifice for the Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, Priests and the Church Universal. Enclosed is my check for the first class rate and I hope I can send more in the future. God bless you all and keep up your most important work! In Christ and His Holy Mother,

Father X

P.S. Please do not publish my name with any of these remarks.

Seeking Pilgrimage Partners

Dear Remnant Readers: My name is Amber Siscoe! I am 19 years old and am currently attending St. Mary's College in St. Mary's, Kansas. Previous to St. Mary's, I was a student at the College of Sts. John Fisher and Thomas More (Fisher More College); however, with the closure of my Alma Mater, I have transferred to St. Mary's. I am now working my way through school with two jobs, hoping to graduate with a two-year Liberal Arts degree from St. Mary's and then continue on for Business Management at another school.

For several years now I have wanted to attend a pilgrimage, particularly Chartres. I have attempted to save money on my own to attend this pilgrimage, but unfortunately my college tuition now takes up most of my

income. For this reason, I am reaching out to others with hope of receiving sponsorship from the generous readers of The Remnant.

From what I have heard from others who have attended the pilgrimage, it is a great opportunity to practice endurance and offer sacrifice to God. This is why I have desired to go for the past several years. I think it would be truly inspiring to see thousands of Catholics all striving and suffering together for the greater glory of Our Lord. I dream of taking part in this crusade.

To any faithful Catholics who generously sponsor me for this trip, I will walk in your name and I offer my struggles and prayers during the pilgrimage for you. For those who would like to but are unable to support, please pray for me, for that is the greatest and most effective gift of all. Thank you and God bless you. Viva Cristo Rey!



Amber Siscoe
League City, TX

Pax Christe, Remnant Readers: My name is Joseph Check, and I have attended the Traditional Latin Mass since I was three years old. For sixteen years now, my family and I have driven sixty miles one way every Sunday and sometimes during the week to assist at the Traditional Latin Mass which I have grown to love and treasure. I've learned the profound differences between the Old and New Mass. I realize there is truly nothing more beautiful this side of Heaven than the Mass of all Ages. I attend the Traditional Latin Mass because it is the perfect form of worship and reverence to God and the true representation of Christ's sacrifice in which He gives to us the greatest gift of Himself through The Holy Eucharist. This is the Mass I prefer in that it has been the source of grace in aiding countless saints as they strived for holiness.

Through God's Divine Providence, I had the great blessing of being able to attend the Chartres Pilgrimage in 2013. It has changed me since, and the entire experience has been a very fond memory that I will never forget. It was an exceedingly profound event to see thousands of Catholics from different parts of the world, and from many walks of life, arrive together as a united Catholic family. It gives one the sense that we are not alone in this continuous fight for our souls and that through

God's powerful grace there is still hope in a world that is progressively becoming more godless. Attending the Chartres Pilgrimage is a unique and special opportunity to witness publicly for our Faith. Early on, and during the tour, my brother Francis and I, accompanied by other pilgrimage friends of the Remnant group, sang and chanted the daily Latin Mass offered by Fr. Gregory Pendergraft FSSP. What an honor to sing the Mass of All Time in so many majestic, magnificent churches and cathedrals! My brother and I also took thousands of photos, filmed various aspects of the Tour, and produced several videos on our JMJ HF Productions YouTube Channel for the entire world to see. We would be more than happy to pass on what is given to us, and in doing so, to contribute to the greater honor and glory of God. We both intend to do the same **and much more** for this upcoming 2015 pilgrimage. To see our video work, please visit our channel on YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/jmjhfproductions> or just visit our website at: <http://jmhjproductions.weebly.com>

If by God's grace, I am privileged to attend this holy pilgrimage again, I aspire to offer my prayers and penances for the salvation of all souls, especially those of my contributors. I thank you in advance for your generous consideration of my sponsorship, and may God bless you abundantly in return. I am prayerfully yours through the Holy Family,

Joseph Check (Age nineteen)
Fairacres, New Mexic

Dear Remnant Readers: My name is Margaret Walsh. I have been brought up in a devout Catholic family that made the effort to attend the Tridentine Mass whenever possible. As a young child I didn't know why this form of the Mass was more fitting and beautiful, but as I matured I grew to see that the Tridentine Mass was more fitting, focused, and directed toward God. However, I didn't truly come to appreciate the Tridentine Rite until recently, when I fell in love with it due to the realization of the unity in adoration, love, and charity amongst those who attend the Tridentine Rite.

At Pentecost, the apostles spoke in tongues and each man heard the Gospel in his own language. When Catholics use the Latin language and the Tridentine form to pray, people of all nations are able to pray in unison. When attending the Tridentine Rite, I have felt the true unity of Christendom, completely focused on Christ the King, Who is to be adored and glorified. On the other hand, the Novus Ordo Rite invites disunity by allowing each country to use its own language and develop its own customs. The Tridentine Rite uses a universal language and form that is focused on the Sacrifice, uniting men in the dignity, beauty and purpose of the Catholic Faith. It is that beauty in unity of adoration of God that I love so much.

I wish to participate in the Chartres Pilgrimage to witness to my love of and devotion to the Tridentine Rite. I wish to share my love of the Tridentine form with others and hope also that it be renewed in the entire Catholic Church and wish to offer up this

intention through penance, prayer and this pilgrimage. As I am currently a student, I ask for your charity in making the possibility of participating in the pilgrimage a reality.

Margaret Walsh



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As has been the case for the past 24 years, young pilgrims will walk the pilgrimage to Chartres in the name of their sponsors. The names of sponsors and their special intentions will also be carried to Chartres and read aloud each day on the Pilgrimage. Your donations to this effort are tax deductible. **MJM**

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Tidings of Comfort and Joy

T. Cullen/*Continued from Page 1*

“carols”), and most importantly of the Mystery surrounding it all, but one likes to believe that on some non-verbal level he is somehow *aware* that this time is a special time, a time of tidings of comfort and joy, a time that will be repeated yearly as he and his understanding grow.

The lad was particularly fascinated by a new Nativity Scene brought from Peru and presented to his parents.



This Nativity Scene is in the form of a *retablo ayacuchano*, a form of folk art derived from the portable altars brought to Peru by Spanish colonizers. The artisans of Ayacucho are renowned for these creations, in which the superstructure is of cedar, painted by hand, with the figurines made from a paste of boiled and ground potato mixed with plaster, then painted by hand.² The process is laborious and the designs often quite original. As can be seen in the *retablo* pictured here, the Holy Family is portrayed as they would have appeared had the Christ Child been of Andean Indian origin in an Andean setting.

Most of the villagers in our local (South American) parish are persons of mixed Amerind-European origin and have Christmas customs quite different from those of the English-speaking world and from those of traditional Catholicism. One might wish that this were not so, but it *is* so and in the spirit of Christmas, one joins with them in singing praises to the newborn Lord in the vernacular “with true love and brotherhood”, setting aside differences during this blessed and holy time. One faces the fact that an attempt to explain authentic Catholicism to the nominally Catholic merry-makers will fall on deaf ears and one will be seen as the Grinch rather than one of the Wise Men. Just as warring soldiers of different faiths and nations called a spontaneous Christmas truce long ago, crossing lines to embrace one another in the spirit of Christmas, so might we all simply share our joy that the Babe is born and leave debate for a different day.

Christmas is a time of celebration, a time for peace and harmony, a time when a weary world can pause and reflect upon God’s great gift of a Savior sent among us to redeem fallen humankind. Beside this awesome fact all else pales into insignificance. The Savior’s birth was a gift to all and to all those who have chosen to acknowledge it, a brotherhood exists that transcends all else at least upon this special day. Fallen humans differ in many respects: religious practices, cultural customs, intellectual capacity, skin color, languages spoken... The list is far longer. But on Christmas Day, we are *all* “within this place” we call our world and we *all* have cause to

celebrate; one can only feel a poignant compassion and pity for those who fail to do so because of ignorance or a tragic and false pride inspired by the Adversary. Remember the wise words of the carol: “Remember Christ, our Savior,/Was born on Christmas day,/To save us all from Satan’s power/When we were gone astray.”

It may be well to remember that there was no “Catholicism”—traditional or otherwise—on the day Christ was born. The Faith was nascent on Christ’s natal day, but not yet organized into a Church. The day we celebrate as Christmas was a day unlike any other day before or since, a day one might be tempted to say that figuratively speaking was “outside of time” as we measure it in our minds; it is a day that is eternal, a day that occurs *every* day during the course of our reasoning lives should we choose to recognize it as such in our *souls*. The simple shepherds and Wise Men who came to the manger to worship the Holy Babe *knew* this with no need of “understanding”; they needed only faith, a Faith imparted to them by an angel.

“Fear not,” then said the Angel,/ ‘let nothing you affright,/This day is born a Savior/Of pure Virgin bright,/To free all those who trust in Him/From Satan’s power and might.”

The Faithful were few on that long-ago Christmas morn: a carpenter and his young wife, three sages from afar and some unlettered shepherds who very likely knew little or nothing of the world beyond walking distance of their homes. The grandeur that was Rome—the capital of the pagan Empire that ruled over the small corner of the earth upon which the Babe in the manger lay—was not in evidence in Bethlehem.

The first “celebration” of Christmas—the actual day of Christ’s birth—was a simple affair, a spontaneous outpouring of worship and adoration. To all present, an angel had imparted the “tidings of comfort and joy” that a Savior was to be born and born He had been, as all present bore witness. It was not until centuries later that Christ’s Nativity was formally celebrated by the Church as a Feast Day. The celebration of Christmas as a family-oriented occasion including caroling and the giving of gifts is a relatively new tradition, dating back to the early-mid-nineteenth century according to a magazine article³ cited in the Wikipedia entry on Christmas.

The tradition of Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve was yet another tradition unfortunately modified by the Second Vatican Council. Given that Christ is believed to have been born at night, the holy birthday was rung in at midnight on the night before Christmas Day in a Mass which those fortunate enough to have attended doubtless remember well. Nowadays, “Midnight” Mass—*Misa de Gallo* (“Rooster’s Mass”) in Spanish—is usually held earlier, sometimes much earlier, although given that the Liturgical “day” begins during the evening of the night before the sidereal “day”, one can conclude that at least the observance is liturgically valid. Times and customs associated with Christmas have greatly changed during this writer’s now-longish

lifetime, but the “centerpiece” of the celebration—the Christ Child—has not, and it is upon Him that this writer prefers to direct his attention. This writer takes great comfort and experiences much joy in the tidings brought to us by the birth of the Christ Child far away and long ago. Nothing anyone can do or say can detract from that.

Friday, 12 December 2014, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas was the fiftieth anniversary of the *Misa Criolla*, a 1964 musical composition by the late Ariel Ramirez (1921-2010), an Argentine pianist and composer. The work was celebrated as a Mass celebrated at St. Peter’s on that day by 750 priests with Pope Francis (also an Argentine, as are my dual-national grandson and his mother) in attendance. The Mass will be sung in Spanish, something that does not sit well with many of us, but means a great deal to many others. It employs folk rhythms that may well grate on the ears of those accustomed to the great Masses composed by classical composers, but one cannot help but listen to it and understand how it reaches the minds, hearts and souls of those who have not had the good fortune to be educated in authentic Catholicism. Does it smack of Modernist deformation of the Mass of All Time? Most definitely. Is it disrespectful? This writer would say it is not. Is it sacrilegious? That is not for this writer to say. This writer believed it

best to listen silently and share in the joy of those in whom it inspires reverence and delight rather than belittle their misguided beliefs in what the Mass should be. There is a time and place for necessary and valuable constructive criticism, but there are also times and places in which it is best postponed; the criticism of a killjoy is seldom welcomed and rarely heeded; when sarcasm and belittlement are employed it becomes destructive and alienating.

God is in the room with us; He is *always* “in the room” with *all* of us at *all* times whether we choose to acknowledge His presence or not. He—He alone—will judge whether or not my silence was a sin of omission, just as He will judge whether or not a sacrilege was committed. It isn’t Santa who knows when one has been “naughty or nice”; God knows. God sees into our minds, hearts and souls. God knows the purity of our intentions. God recognizes anger and pride when we may not. Perhaps it is better at times to embrace rather than push away.

This writer wishes to celebrate Christmas by embracing those with whom he agrees and those with whom he disagrees in the spirit of brotherhood brought to us by the Babe in the manger God rest ye merry one and all on Christmas day in the morning and every day throughout the days and years to come! ■

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² https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Retablo_ayacuchano

³ Rowell, Geoffrey, “Dickens and the Construction of Christmas”, *History Today*, Volume: 43 Issue: 12, December 1993, pp. 17 – 24.

Remembrances of Christmases Past

By Vincent Chiarello

■ “When we have passed a certain age, the soul of the child we were and the souls of the dead from whom we sprung come to lavish on us their riches and their spells.” -

Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*

Perhaps it is my age and the recognition, to recall a comment by a Norwegian man I knew, that, at a certain point, we tend to view our life's most pleasant moments by looking back in our rear view mirror of life more than through the windshield of the future, and what lies ahead. And true to form, I spend a lot of my time these days recalling - or trying to - events in my early life: good friends long since departed, important events as your children's births, honors won, battles lost. Ultimately, we recognize that we've arrived at what Cicero, in his essay on aging, (*De Senectute*), called: “The crown of life, our play's last act.”

Since this is the Christmas Season, memories of Christmas past flood my mind these days. At the same time I ask myself if I am not painting too rosy a picture in describing these events, for it was Vladimir Nabokov who called memory, “the great liar.” But the memories there are, and they bring back a time when life was a lot simpler, and probably nicer, too.

Although both my parents were born in the U.S., they were the children of immigrants; hence, Old World customs reigned supreme during our Christmas festivities. Our family problem centered around with whom we would spend the holidays, but that was easily resolved: one Christmas with my father's Sicilian family, and New Years with my mother's Calabrese heirs, and the reverse the following year. The bigger problem was fitting the families of my father's four siblings or my mother's four brothers into our small apartment. Still we survived.

Food was an important staple of the Christmas Season, and Christmas Eve was a day of fasting, so no meat could be consumed until Christmas day. But all the baking was done before, and on Christmas Eve, the men and women separated: men playing cards, and the women knitting and chatting around the kitchen table. They would also discuss the preparations for the following day, aided by the guests bringing a dish of some kind. And I recall that the children kept busy, with no television or video games to occupy our time.

After the fish meal, the men resumed playing cards, but toward the evening, my aunts and mother would attend the Midnight Mass. Truth be told, most of the men rarely went to Mass, repeating my father's on-going rationale: “I didn't do anything wrong!”

On Christmas Day, my cousins and I were up early opening the presents under the tree, an event which could be

confusing: in our family, each first born son was named after the grandfather, so many of us had the same name. Which present, then, was for me, or for my other cousins also named Vincent? But my mother and aunts were up long before us preparing for a full day of cooking. At about 1:00 in the afternoon, with the main table set for the adults, and small tables for the children, “pranzo” began; it lasted for several hours, and was a veritable feast for a king.

It is hard to believe what was included, but there was the pro forma beginning pasta dish (usually a baked lasagna), then the meat cooked and simmered in

the tomato sauce that was made for the occasion, and salad...but then out came the roasted chicken and potatoes. Then the fresh fruit and roasted chestnuts, and finally the espresso coffee with Italian pastries.

Toward evening, the families began their return to their homes, almost always using public transportation. I cannot say exactly when that tradition of spending Christmas with members of the extended family passed into history, but with the suburbanization of the country, families moved further and further apart, in stark contrast to the time when entire families lived within walking distance of each other. Perhaps the following generation

didn't take such a responsibility as seriously, and what soon became evident was that inter-family gatherings became intra-family gatherings, but something was lost in the process. It has never been recaptured.

I often look back through my rear view mirror of life these days, for the memories of those childhood days during Christmas still reverberate. I recall a phrase that claimed that any passion for any period is not wise: “He who marries the spirit of the age is soon left a widower.” Perhaps, but I believe that, like most good marriages, the widower insists that the memories of those good times were well worth it. ■

The Journey of the Magi



by T. S. Eliot

‘A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.’
And the camels galled, sorefooted,
refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the
terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and
grumbling
and running away, and wanting their
liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the
lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns
unfriendly

And the villages dirty and charging high
prices:

A hard time we had of it.

At the end we preferred to travel all
night,

Sleeping in snatches,

With the voices singing in our ears,
saying

That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a
temperate valley,

Wet, below the snow line, smelling of
vegetation;

With a running stream and a water-mill
beating the darkness,

And three trees on the low sky,

And an old white horse galloped away in
the meadow.

Then we came to a tavern with vine-
leaves over the lintel,

Six hands at an open door dicing for
pieces of silver,

And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.

But there was no information, and so we
continued

And arriving at evening, not a moment
too soon

Finding the place; it was (you might say)
satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I
remember,

And I would do it again, but set down

This set down

This: were we led all that way for

Birth or Death? There was a Birth,
certainly

We had evidence and no doubt.

I had seen birth and death,

But had thought they were different; this
Birth was

Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death,
our death.

We returned to our places, these
Kingdoms,

But no longer at ease here, in the old
dispensation,

With an alien people clutching their
gods.

I should be glad of another death. ■

“Journey of the Magi” is a 43-line poem written
in 1927 by T. S. Eliot. It is one of five poems that
Eliot contributed for a series of 38 pamphlets by
several authors collectively titled *Ariel Poems*



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A Remaining Christmas

H. Belloc/Continued from Page 1

Down this room there runs a very long oaken table as dark with age almost as the beams above it, and this table has a history. It came out of one of the Oxford colleges when the Puritans looted them 300 years ago. It never got back to its original home. It passed from one family to another until at last it was purchased (in his youth and upon his marriage) by the man who now owns this house. Those who know about such things give its date as the beginning of the seventeenth century. It was made, then, while Shakespeare was still living, and while the faith of England still hung in the balance; for one cannot say that England was certain to lose her Catholicism finally till the first quarter of that century was passed. This table, roughly carved at the side, has been polished with wax since first it began to bear food for men, and now the surface shines like a slightly, very slightly, undulating sea in a calm. At night the brass candlesticks (for this house is lit with candles, as the proper light for men's eyes) are reflected in it as in still brown water; so are the vessels of glass and of silver and of pewter, and the flagons of wine. No cloth is ever spread to hide this venerable splendour, nor, let us hope, ever will be.

At one end of the house, where the largest of its many outer doors (there are several such) swings massively upon huge forged iron hinges, there is a hall, not very wide; its length is as great as the width of the house and its height very great for its width. Like the chapel, its roof soars up, steep and dark, so that from its floor (which is made of very great and heavy slabs of the local stone) one looks up to the roof-tree itself. This hall has another great wide hearth in it for the burning of oak, and there is an oaken staircase, very wide and of an easy slope, with an oaken balustrade and leading up to an open gallery above, whence you look down upon the piece. Above this gallery is a statue of Our Lady, carved in wood, uncoloured, and holding the Holy Child, and beneath her many shelves of books. This room is panelled, as are so many of the rooms of the house, but it has older panels than any of the others, and the great door of it opens on to the high road.

Now the way Christmas is kept in this house is this:

On Christmas Eve a great quantity of holly and of laurel is brought in from the garden and from the farm (for this house has a farm of 100 acres attached to it and an oak wood of ten acres). This greenery is put up all over the house in every room just before it becomes dark on that day. Then there is brought into the hall a young pine tree, about twice the height of a man, to serve for a Christmas tree, and on this innumerable little candles are fixed, and presents for all the household and the guests and the children of the village.

It is at about five o'clock that these last come into the house, and at that hour in



Hilaire Belloc, Traditional Catholic

England, at that date, it has long been quite dark; so they come into a house all illuminated with the Christmas tree shining like a cluster of many stars seen through a glass.

The first thing done after the entry of these people from the village and their children (the children are in number about fifty—for this remote place keeps a good level through the generations and does not shrink or grow, but remains itself) is a common meal, where all eat and drink their fill in the offices. Then the children come in to the Christmas tree. They are each given a silver piece one by one, and one by one, their presents. After that they dance in the hall and sing songs, which have been handed down to them for I do not know how long.

These songs are game-songs, and are sung to keep time with the various parts in each game, and the men and things and animals which you hear mentioned in these songs are all of that countryside. Indeed, the tradition of Christmas here is what it should be everywhere, knit into the very stuff of the place; so that I fancy the little children, when they think of Bethlehem, see it in their minds as though it were in the winter depth of England, which is as it should be.

These games and songs continue for as long as they will, and then they file out past the great fire in the hearth to a small piece adjoining where a crib has been set up with images of Our Lady and St Joseph and the Holy Child, the Shepherds, and what I will call, by your leave, the Holy Animals. And here, again, tradition is so strong in this house that these figures are never new-bought, but are as old as the oldest of the children of the family, now with children of their own. On this account, the donkey has lost one of its plaster ears, and the old ox which used to be all brown is now piebald, and of the shepherds, one actually has no head. But all that is lacking is imagined.

There hangs from the roof of the crib over the Holy Child a tinsel star grown rather obscure after all these years, and much too large for the place. Before this crib

the children (some of them Catholic and some Protestant, for the village is mixed) sing their carols; the one they know best is the one which begins: 'The First Good Joy that Mary had, it was the joy of One'. There are a half a dozen or so of these carols which the children here sing; and mixed with their voices is the voice of the miller (for this house has a great windmill attached to it). The miller is famous in these parts for his singing, having a very deep and loud voice which is his pride. When these carols are over, all disperse, except those who are living in the house, but the older ones are not allowed to go without more good drink for their viaticum, a sustenance for Christian men.

Then the people of the house, when they have dined, and their guests, with the priest who is to say Mass for them, sit up till near midnight. There is brought in a very large log of oak (you must be getting tired of oak by this time! But everything here is oaken, for the house is of the Weald). This log of oak is the Christmas or Yule log and the rule is that it must be too heavy for one man to lift; so two men come, bringing it in from outside, the master of the house and his servant. They cast it down upon the fire in the great hearth of the dining-room, and the superstition is that, if it burns all night and is found still smouldering in the morning, the home will be prosperous for the coming year.

With that they all go up to the chapel and there the three night Masses are said, one after the other, and those of the household take their Communion.

Next morning they sleep late, and the great Christmas dinner is at midday. It is a turkey; and plum pudding, with holly in it and everything conventional, and therefore satisfactory, is done. Crackers are pulled, the brandy is lit and poured over the pudding till the holly crackles in the flame and the curtains are drawn a moment that the flames may be seen. This Christmas feast, so great that it may be said almost to fill the day, they may reprove who will; but for my part I applaud.

Now, you must not think that Christmas being over, the season and its glories are at an end, for in this house there is kept up the full custom of the Twelve Days, so that 'Twelfth Day', the Epiphany, still has, to its inhabitants, its full and ancient meaning as it had when Shakespeare wrote. The green is kept in its place in every room, and not a leaf of it must be moved until Epiphany morning, but on the other hand not a leaf of it must remain in the house, nor the Christmas tree either, by Epiphany evening. It is all taken out and burnt in a special little coppice reserved for these good trees which have done their Christmas duty; and now, after so many years, you might almost call it a little forest, for each tree has lived, bearing witness to the holy vitality of unbroken ritual and inherited things.

In the midst of this season between

Christmas and Twelfth Day comes the ceremony of the New Year, and this is how it is observed:

On New Years' Eve, at about a quarter to twelve o'clock at night, the master of the house and all that are with him go about from room to room opening every door and window, however cold the weather be, for thus, they say, the old year and its burdens can go out and leave everything new for hope and for the youth of the coming time.

This also is a superstition, and of the best. Those who observe it trust that it is as old as Europe, and with roots stretching back into forgotten times. While this is going on the bells in the church hard by are ringing out the old year, and when all the windows and doors have thus been opened and left wide, all those in the house go outside, listening for the cessation of the chimes, which comes just before the turn of the year.

There is an odd silence of a few minutes, and watches are consulted to make certain of the time (for this house detests wireless and has not even a telephone), and the way they know the moment of midnight is by the boom of a gun, which is fired at a town far off, but can always be heard.

At that sound the bells of the church clash out suddenly in new chords, the master of the house goes back into it with a piece of stone or earth from outside, all doors are shut, and the household, all of them, rich and poor, drink a glass of wine together to salute the New Year.

This, which I have just described, is not in a novel or in a play. It is real, and goes on as the ordinary habit of living men and women. I fear that set down thus in our terribly changing time it must sound very strange and, perhaps in places, grotesque, but to those who practice it, it is not only sacred, but normal, having in the whole of the complicated affair a sacramental quality and an effect of benediction: not to be despised.

Indeed, modern men, who lack such things, lack sustenance, and our fathers who founded all those ritual observances were very wise.

* * *

Man has a body as well as a soul, and the whole of man, soul and body, is nourished sanely by a multiplicity of observed traditional things. Moreover, there is this great quality in the unchanging practice of Holy Seasons, that it makes explicable, tolerable, and normal what is otherwise a shocking and intolerable and even in the fullest sense, abnormal thing. I mean, the mortality of immortal men.

Not only death (which shakes and rends all that is human in us, creating a monstrous separation and threatening the soul with isolation which destroys), not only death, but that accompaniment of mortality which is a perpetual series

Continued Next Page

The God in the Cave

■ We must either leave Christ out of Christmas, or Christmas out of Christ, or we must admit, if only as we admit it in an old picture, that those holy heads are too near together for the haloes not to mingle and cross.

By G. K. Chesterton

This sketch of the human story began in a cave; the cave which popular science associates with the cave-man and in which practical discovery has really found archaic drawings of animals. The second half of human history, which was like a new creation of the world, also begins in a cave. There is even a shadow of such a fancy in the fact that animals were again present; for it was a cave used as a stable by the mountaineers of the uplands about Bethlehem; who still drive their cattle into such holes and caverns at night. It was here that a homeless couple had crept underground with the cattle when the doors of the crowded caravanserai had been shut in their faces; and it was here beneath the very feet of the passersby, in a cellar under the very floor of the world, that Jesus Christ was born.

But in that second creation there was indeed something symbolical in the roots of the primeval rock or the horns of the prehistoric herd. God also was a CaveMan, and, had also traced strange shapes of creatures, curiously colored upon the wall of the world; but the pictures that he made had come to life.



A mass of legend and literature, which increases and will never end has repeated and rung the changes on that single paradox; that the hands that had made the sun and stars were too small to reach the huge heads of the cattle. Upon this paradox, we might almost say upon this jest, all the literature of our faith is founded. It is at least like a jest in this; that it is something which the scientific critic cannot see. He laboriously explains the difficulty which we have always defiantly and almost derisively exaggerated; and mildly condemns as improbable something that we have almost madly exalted as incredible; as something that would be much too good to be true, except that it is true. When that contrast between the cosmic creation and the little local infancy has

been repeated, reiterated, underlined, emphasized, exulted in, sung, shouted, roared, not to say howled, in a hundred thousand hymns, carols, rhymes, rituals, pictures, poems, and popular sermons, it may be suggested that we hardly need a higher critic to draw our attention to something a little odd about it; especially one of the sort that seems to take a long time to see a joke, even his own joke. But about this contrast and combination of ideas one thing may be said here, because it is relevant to the whole thesis of this book. The sort of modern critic of whom I speak is generally much impressed with the importance of education in life and the importance of psychology in education. That sort of man is never tired of telling us that first impressions fix character by the law of causation; and he will become quite nervous if a child's visual sense is poisoned by the wrong colors on a golliwog or his nervous system prematurely shaken by a cacophonous rattle. Yet he will think us very narrow-minded, if we say that this is exactly why there really is a difference between being brought up as a Christian and being brought up as a Jew or a Moslem or an atheist. The difference is that every Catholic child has learned from pictures, and even every Protestant child from stones, this incredible combination of contrasted ideas as one of the very first impressions on his mind.

It is not merely a theological difference. It is a psychological difference which can outlast any theologies. It really is, as that sort of scientist loves to say about anything, incurable. Any agnostic or atheist whose childhood has known a real Christmas has ever afterwards, whether he likes it or not, an association in his mind between two ideas that most of mankind must regard as remote from each other; the idea of a baby and the idea of unknown strength that sustains the stars. His instincts and imagination can still connect them, when his reason can no longer see the need of the connection; for him there will always be some savor of religion about the mere picture of a mother and a baby; some hint of mercy and softening about the mere mention of the dreadful name of God. But the two ideas are not naturally or necessarily combined. They would not

be necessarily combined for an ancient Greek or a Chinaman, even for Aristotle or Confucius. It is no more inevitable to connect God with an infant than to connect gravitation with a kitten. It has been created in our minds by Christmas because we are Christians; because we are psychological Christians even when we are not theological ones.

In other words, this combination of ideas has emphatically, in the much disputed phrase, altered human nature. There is really a difference between the man who knows it and the man who does not. It may not be a difference of moral worth, for the Moslem or the Jew might be worthier according to his lights; but it is a plain fact about the crossing of two particular lights, the conjunction of two stars in our particular horoscope. Omnipotence and impotence, or divinity and infancy, do definitely make a sort of epigram which a million repetitions cannot turn into a platitude. It is not unreasonable to call it unique.

Bethlehem is emphatically a place where extremes meet. Here begins, it is needless to say, another mighty influence for the humanization of Christendom. If the world wanted what is called a non-controversial aspect of Christianity, it would probably select Christmas. Yet it is obviously bound up with what is supposed to be a controversial aspect (I could never at any stage of my opinions imagine why): the respect paid to the Blessed Virgin.

When I was a boy a more Puritan generation objected to a statue upon my parish church representing the Virgin and Child. After much controversy, they compromised by taking away the Child. One would think that this was even more corrupted with Mariolatry, unless the mother was counted less dangerous when deprived of a sort of weapon. But the practical difficulty is also a parable. You cannot chip away the statue of a mother from all round that of a newborn child. You cannot suspend the new-born child in mid-air; indeed you cannot really have a statue of a newborn child at all.

Similarly, you cannot suspend the idea of a newborn child in the void or think of him without thinking of his mother. You cannot visit the child without visiting the mother, you cannot in common human life approach the child except through the mother. If we are to think of Christ in this aspect at all, the other idea follows as it is followed in history. We must either leave Christ out of Christmas, or Christmas out of Christ, or we must admit, if only as we admit it in an old picture, that those holy heads are too near together for the haloes not to mingle and cross.

It might be suggested, in a somewhat violent image, that nothing had happened in that fold or crack in the great gray hills except that the whole universe had been turned inside out. I mean that all the eyes of wonder and worship which had been turned outwards to the largest thing were now turned inward to the smallest. The very image will suggest all that multitudinous marvel of converging eyes that makes so much of the colored Catholic imagery like a peacock's tail.

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A Remaining Christmas

H. Belloc/Continued from Page 7

of lesser deaths and is called change, are challenged, chained, and put in their place by unaltered and successive acts of seasonable regard for loss and dereliction and mutability. The threats of despair, remorse, necessary expiation, weariness almost beyond bearing, dull repetition of things apparently fruitless, unnecessary and without meaning, estrangement, the misunderstanding of mind by mind, forgetfulness which is a false alarm, grief, and repentance, which are true ones, but of a sad company, young men perished in battle before their parents had lost vigour in age, the perils of sickness in the body and even in the mind, anxiety, honour harassed, all the bitterness of living—become part of a large business which may lead to Beatitude. For they are all connected in the memory with holy day after holy day, year by year, binding the generations together; carrying on even in this world, as it were, the life of the dead and giving corporate substance, permanence and stability, without the symbol of which (at least) the vast increasing burden of life might at last conquer us and be no longer borne.

This house where such good things are done year by year has suffered all the things that every age has suffered. It has known the sudden separation of wife and husband, the sudden fall of young men under arms who will never more come home, the scattering of the living and their precarious return, the increase and the loss of fortune, all those terrors and all those lessenings and haltings and failures of hope which make up the life of man. But its Christmas binds it to its own past and promises its future; making the house an undying thing of which those subject to mortality within it are members, sharing in its continuous survival.

It is not wonderful that of such a house verse should be written. Many verses have been so written commemorating and praising this house. The last verse written of it I may quote by way of ending:

Stand thou for ever among human Houses,
House of the Resurrection, House of Birth;
House of the rooted hearts and long carouses,
Stand, and be famous over all the Earth. ■



Continued...

But it is true in a sense that God who had been only a circumference was seen as a centre; and a centre is infinitely small.

It is true that the spiritual spiral henceforward works inwards instead of outwards, and in that sense is centripetal and not centrifugal. The faith becomes, in more ways than one, a religion of little things. But its traditions in art and literature and popular fable have quite sufficiently attested, as has been said, this particular paradox of the divine being in the cradle. Perhaps they have not so clearly emphasized the significance of the divine being in the cave. Curiously enough, indeed, tradition has not very clearly emphasized the cave. It is a familiar fact that the Bethlehem scene has been represented in every possible setting of time and country, of landscape and architecture; and it is a wholly happy and admirable fact that men have conceived it as quite different according to their different individual traditions and tastes. But while all have realized that it was a stable, not so many have realized that it was a cave.

Some critics have even been so silly as to suppose that there was some contradiction between the stable and the cave; in which case they cannot know much about caves or stables in Palestine. As they see differences that are not there, it is needless to add that they do not see differences that are there. When a well-known critic says, for instance, that Christ being born in a rocky cavern is like Mithras having sprung alive out of a rock, it sounds like a parody upon comparative religion. There is such a thing as the point of a story, even if it is a story in the sense of a lie. And the notion of a hero appearing, like Pallas from the brain of Zeus, mature and without a mother, is obviously the very opposite of the idea of a god being born like an ordinary baby and entirely dependent on a mother. Whichever ideal we might prefer, we should surely see that they are contrary ideals. It is as stupid to connect them because they both contain a substance called stone as to identify the punishment of the Deluge with the baptism in the Jordan because they both contain a substance called water. Whether as a myth or a mystery, Christ was obviously conceived as born in a hole in the rocks

primarily because it marked the position of one outcast and homeless. Nevertheless it is true, as I have said, that the cave has not been so commonly or so clearly used as a symbol as the other realities that surrounded the first Christmas.

And the reason for this also refers to the very nature of that new world. It was in a sense the difficulty of a new dimension. Christ was not only born on the level of the world, but even lower than the world. The first act of the divine drama was enacted, not only on no stage set up above the sightseer, but on a dark and curtained stage sunken out of sight; and that is an idea very difficult to express in most modes of artistic expression. It is the idea of simultaneous happenings on different levels of life. Something like it might have been attempted in the more archaic and decorative medieval art. But the more the artists learned of realism and perspective, the less they could depict at once the angels in the heavens and the shepherds on the hills, and the glory in the darkness that was under the hills. Perhaps it could have been best conveyed by the characteristic expedient of some of the medieval guilds, when they wheeled about the streets a theater with three stages one above the other, with heaven above the earth and hell under the earth. But in the riddle of Bethlehem it was heaven that was under the earth.

There is in that alone the touch of a revolution, as of the world turned upside down. It would be vain to attempt to say anything adequate, or anything new, about the change which this conception of a deity born like an outcast or even an outlaw had upon the whole conception of law and its duties to the poor and outcast. It is profoundly true to say that after that moment there could be no slaves. There could be and were people bearing that legal title, until the Church was strong enough to weed them out, but there could be no more of the pagan repose in the mere advantage to the state of keeping it a servile state. Individuals became important, in a sense in which no instruments can be important. A man could not be a means to an end, at any rate to any other man's end. All this popular and fraternal element in the story has been rightly attached by tradition to the episode of the Shepherds; the hinds

who found themselves talking face to face with the princes of heaven. But there is another aspect of the popular element as represented by the shepherds which has not perhaps been so fully developed; and which is more directly relevant here.

Men of the people, like the shepherds, men of the popular tradition, had everywhere been the makers of the mythologies. It was they who had felt most directly, with least check or chill from philosophy or the corrupt cults of civilization, the need we have already considered; the images that were adventures of the imagination; the mythology that was a sort of search for the tempting and tantalizing hints of something half human in nature; the

dumb significance of seasons and special places. They had best understood that the soul of a landscape is a story and the soul of a story is a personality. But rationalism had already begun to rot away these really irrational though imaginative treasures of the peasant; even as systematic slavery had eaten the peasant out of house and home. Upon all such peasantries everywhere there was descending a dusk

and twilight of disappointment, in the hour when these few men discovered what they sought.

Everywhere else Arcadia was fading from the forest. Pan was dead and the shepherds were scattered like sheep. And though no man knew it, the hour was near which was to end and to fulfill all things; and though no man heard it, there was one far-off cry in an unknown tongue upon the heaving wilderness of the mountains. The shepherds had found their Shepherd. And the thing they found was of a kind with the things they sought. The populace had been wrong in many things; but they had not been wrong in believing that holy things could have a habitation and that divinity need not disdain the limits of time and space. And the barbarian who conceived the crudest fancy about the sun being stolen and hidden in a box, or the wildest myth about the god being rescued and his enemy deceived with a stone, was nearer to the secret of the cave and knew more about the crisis of the world than all those in the circle of cities round the Mediterranean who had become content with cold abstractions or cosmopolitan generalizations; than all those who were spinning thinner and thinner threads of thought out of the transcendentalism of Plato or the orientalism of Pythagoras.

The place that the shepherds found was not an academy or an abstract republic; it was not a place of myths allegorized or dissected or explained or explained away. It was a place of dreams come true. Since that hour no mythologies have been made in the world. Mythology is a search. ■

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The Dawn of Grace

By Susan Claire Potts

Will Evans glanced at his phone as he walked through the lobby of the Columbia Center and headed out the glass doors. He didn't look up. His eyes were fixed on the flat glowing screen.

Three text messages, one voicemail, but nothing from Trudy. Not one word.

It was five o'clock on Christmas Eve. Snow was mounding against the building, and tiny lights sparkled like stars from heaven in the trees along the boulevard. But Will didn't notice any of it.

The young lawyer from San Diego didn't believe in Christmas. He believed in what he could see and touch and feel. That was real. Everything else was just a desperate attempt to find meaning where there was none. People should be honest with themselves, he thought. There was no deeper meaning to anything.

The wind was fierce. Snow blew in his face as he slipped and slid his way to his car. *What am I doing in Michigan?* he grumbled. *Why'd I even come back?*

He knew why. Trudy didn't want to get married. *Marriage was so totally unnecessary*, she said when he asked her. *Couldn't we just keep thing the way they are?*

No, we couldn't, he'd said. It wasn't because of religion. The only time he'd ever been in church was at his baptism. But he'd tried to live a good life. He knew that the way people were substituting *relationships* for marriage wasn't right. You were supposed to get married, have a family, he told her.

She rolled her eyes. *That's so lame*, she said. *The world has changed*. Will knew that. He didn't like it, but he didn't know what to do about it.

I guess that's it then, he said. *We're going in different directions*.

"Friends?" she'd asked when he left her at her door.

"Sure. Always."

It was over. He loved her. But it

wouldn't work. There was no way. He couldn't think beyond that. All he knew was that he had to leave California. He had to leave Trudy. He decided to go back to Michigan where he'd lived until he was nine years old. He'd taken the bar, passed it, and joined a law firm in Troy, a city twenty miles from Dearborn, the place he called his hometown.

Maybe someday he'd forget her.

He stopped for coffee on the way home. He had just parked his car when his phone vibrated against his leg. He pulled it out and read the text. *Happy Holidays*. T.

He made a face. Could it get any more impersonal than that? Trudy couldn't even spell out her name. He shoved the phone back in his pocket and got out of the car. *The Little Drummer Boy* was playing on outdoor speakers. He didn't even hear it as he hurried across the icy parking lot to the bakery.

Twinkling lights framed the windows. There were red-checked cloths on the bistro tables and a Christmas tree in the corner. Will went inside and was heading toward the counter when he stopped short.

Someone was baking gingerbread. A long-forgotten image of a woman in a blue apron rose in his mind—Mrs. Kaslauskas, his old neighbor, the widow he called Grandma Kaz.

They're gingerbread boys, she had told him when he was helping her get ready for Christmas. *Not gingerbread men. Boys. Like in the song. Little drummer boys*.

He hadn't smelled or tasted gingerbread since then. Not since his family moved to San Diego when he was in the fourth grade. His parents were anthropologists, and they were leaving Wayne State to teach at the University of California. Will didn't want to go. *You'll love it*, they told him when he cried himself to sleep.

They left right after Christmas. Mrs. Kaslauskas had sent him off with a box of gingerbread and a promise to come see her sometime. He hadn't done it. There was school and college, then

law school. He'd accomplished a lot. But he'd never gone back to visit the gingerbread grandma.

He pushed the promise out of his mind. He bought some gingerbread and ate it as he drove home. It didn't taste like he remembered. Something wasn't right.

He could hear Grandma Kaz's voice. *Maybe there's no love in it*.

Stupid, he said to himself. *What's stupid is to think there's no meaning to things*.

He shook it off. But when he got home other memories of his childhood washed over him like waves of the Pacific. He sat down on the couch and buried his head in his hands.

It all came back. The little bungalow. The tiny kitchen. Christmas songs on an old record player. And standing at the stove, gray-haired and plump, was Grandma Kaz, singing softly with the music.

He was nine years old and there was gingerbread in the oven. It was snowing then too, and Will was helping decorate her Christmas tree. He placed the silver star on top, plugged in the lights, and then went into the kitchen.

"Thank you, Will," she said. "Now we're ready for Baby Jesus." She handed him a mug of hot chocolate as he sat down at the table. "You must always be on the watch this time of year."

"Why?"

"Because you never know what's going to happen. Christmas is the time of miracles." He didn't understand. Grandma Kaz was always saying things nobody else said. And knowing things nobody else knew. He drank his cocoa, then sat there, chin in his hands, looking out the window at the falling snow, thinking. His parents didn't celebrate Christmas. They didn't decorate their house or go to Midnight Mass. She looked at him and wiped her hands on her apron, clucking over the poor boy who didn't know what Christmas meant. He'd never told her that, but she knew. She could see the longing in his eyes.

Everything has meaning, Grandma Kaz said as she pulled the cookie sheet out of the oven, set it on the counter, then turned to face him. *See this gingerbread. It's not just something good to eat. There's love in it. Love passed down from people here and people passed on. Their thoughts and dreams and hopes are in it*.

She looked at him as if she could see right into his heart. *But there's more*, she said. *Over and through and in everything, there's God's Love for man. That's where the meaning is, the meaning of Christmas. It's there if you look for it*. She shook her head. *Trouble is, nobody looks*.

Will wondered what she meant. He asked his father that night at dinner.

"She's crazy," Dr. Evans said.

"Now, dear," his mother interceded. "She's old. Humor her, Will."

He dropped his eyes. That didn't seem right. Besides, she wasn't that old. *Christmas is merely the incorporation of a primitive archetype*, his parents told him. There was no meaning in it. No God ever came to earth as a baby. It was absurd, they said.

Will picked up his fork and moved his peas around the plate. He didn't know what to think. They were his parents. Wasn't he supposed to believe them? And then he'd put it all out of his mind.

Until now.

He couldn't stop thinking about it. He was twenty-nine years old and he had to do something. He had to know the truth. On impulse, he got up, put on his coat, and headed out the door.

He would go to see Grandma Kaz. She would know what he needed to know. Dearborn was only half an hour away. He had time before she left for Midnight Mass. It never occurred to him that she might not be there.

When he got to her house, a young woman opened the door.

"Yes?" she asked.

Will looked around. *Maybe he was at the wrong house. But, no, this was it*. "I'm Will Evans," he said. "I used to live next door. I'm looking for Mrs. Kaslauskas."

"She doesn't live here anymore."

Will hesitated. "Did she die?" he asked.

The young woman shook her head. "I don't know. We bought this house a couple of months ago. I heard the owner was in a nursing home."

"Do you know what one?"

"No. Sorry."

"Thanks." He turned and started down the steps.

She stopped him. "I could call the realtor."

"Don't bother him...it's Christmas Eve."

"He doesn't have to answer." She pulled her phone out of her jeans pocket and speed dialed a number.

"Chas? Hey, it's Melissa. To you, too. Listen, remember the old lady that sold us our house? Do you know what nursing home they put her in?"

Will cringed.

"Thanks. Got it. 'Bye." She tucked the phone away. "Mercy Center," she said. "4265 Noland Avenue."

He thanked her, then headed back to his car and tapped the address into his GPS. He was there in ten minutes. The receptionist buzzed him in.

"I'm looking for Mrs. Kaslauskas," he told her.

"Are you family?"

"Not exactly," Will said. "But I called her Grandma."

The receptionist didn't smile. "Sign in over there. She's in St. Nicholas Hall."

"Thanks." Will walked down the

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Continued...

corridor and stopped at the nursing station. A nurse in tan scrubs was sitting at the computer. She ignored him.

"Excuse me," Will said. "I'm looking for Mrs. Kaslauskas."

"Room 103. But she's probably asleep. She sleeps most of the time."

"Could I just go see her?"

The nurse shrugged. "If you want."

Will found the room and stood at the door. Her hair was white now, but otherwise Grandma Kaz looked the same. Her face seemed ageless to him, like an angel's. She was holding a doll, cradled in her arms like a baby. He wondered what that was all about.

He pulled a chair up beside the bed. He didn't know what to do. Maybe she was dying. He felt silly saying anything. It would be like talking to himself. He supposed he should pray, but he didn't know how. Instead, he started to sing, low, almost a whisper, a song she used to sing. *Come, they told me... a newborn King to see...*

She heard, opened her eyes, and gasped. "Will! Is that you?"

He grinned. "It is," he said.

"Dear boy!" she cried, then caught herself. "I'm sorry. You're still a child in my mind."

"And you're still Grandma Kaz."

Her eyes brimmed with unshed tears. "How did you find me?"

He told her, then looked down at his empty hands. "I should have brought you something."

"You're the gift. You always were."

Will didn't know what to say. She was so alert, so alive. Just like he remembered. But why was she holding that doll? He had to know.

"So what's with the doll?" he asked.

She looked down at the doll in her

arms, tucked the blanket around it, then chuckled. "Someone must have brought it in when I was sleeping. They give them to all the old ladies."

"Why? That seems weird."

"Reminds them of their children, I guess." She shook her head. "But I never had children..." She paused and reached for his hand. "Just you."

Will's chest tightened. "Do you want me to put the doll away?" he asked.

"Not yet. It's Christmas Eve, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Then let me hold it awhile. I can think of Baby Jesus." Her eyes were bright. "I'm waiting for Him."

The nurse came in with a medicine cup. She gave Grandma Kaz the pills without saying a word, then left. Will grit his teeth. He didn't like anything about the place.

"How'd you wind up here, anyway?" he asked.

"I fell and broke my hip. But my work's almost done. Just a few more things to do and then I can go home."

"But your house was sold..."

She laughed. "Not that home, Will. Heaven." She looked at him searchingly. "You still don't know, do you?"

He shook his head.

"Maybe now you'll learn."

"That'd take a miracle."

"Christmas is the time of miracles." She squeezed his hand. "Now, listen. Since I can't walk or even sit in a wheelchair, I haven't been in the chapel. I need you to go there for me. Light a candle and offer some prayers. Will you do that?"

"Of course. But, Grandma Kaz..."

She held up her hand. "I know. You don't know any. But you'll think of something. Do that and then stop back here before you leave. All right?"

"All right."

He left her and went to the chapel. Everything was ready for Christmas. Poinsettias flanked the altar, and candles glowed in front of the crèche. There would be no Midnight Mass, so the Infant was already in his crib, awaiting the angels, the shepherds, and the dawn.

A red vigil light burned beside the tabernacle. Will didn't know about the Blessed Sacrament. He had never heard of the Real Presence. He lit a candle, and then he felt something, something strong as a magnet, pulling him forward.

Kneel.

No one had taught him to do that. He knelt and bowed his head, but he didn't know what to do next.

Help me. Help me know what Grandma Kaz knows.

The song popped in his head. *I have no gifts to bring...*

And then he wept. Wept for all the things he had done wrong. Wept for all he had lost. Wept for all he didn't know. Cleansing tears. Tears of grace.

He walked over to the crèche and looked at the Baby in the manger. He knew now. His parents were wrong. God really had come to earth as a little Child. He knew it without knowing how he knew.

"Be with me," he whispered to the Virgin Mother. "Teach me." It was getting late. He wiped his eyes with the back of his hand and headed back to Grandma Kaz.

She was still awake. Their eyes met. "Good," she said as if she knew what had happened to him. "Now you begin."

"Thank you." He leaned down and kissed her forehead. "I'll go now, let you sleep. Would you like me to come tomorrow? Spend Christmas with you? Maybe bring some gingerbread?"

"First you go to Mass."

"All right," he said. "But I won't know what to do."

"You'll learn." And then she fell asleep.

Will was turning to leave when his eye caught a quick movement. He looked down at Grandma Kaz. His eyes widened. Instead of the doll, a little baby rested in her arms.

I'm imagining things, he thought.

He watched, awestruck, as the Child drew His arm from the blanket, reached up, and touched the old woman's face.

She stirred, but didn't open her eyes. "Baby Jesu," she whispered. *Little Child, Little Holy One.*

Moonlight streamed through the window. And then, in an instant, everything was back the way it had been.

Will could hardly breathe. His heart enlarged with a Love beyond understanding.

Was it a dream? Was it real? He didn't know.

It was still snowing when he left the nursing home. As he walked down the sidewalk, a single star broke through the clouds and lit his path.

He looked up and smiled. *Everything has meaning,* Grandma Kaz had told him.

Christmas is the time of miracles. ■

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Undermining Christ by Falsely Accusing His Vicar

In Defense of Papa Pacelli

By Vincent Chiarello

One of my favorite Roman restaurants is Scarpone, which began serving the public in 1849, and is located in front of one part of the Aurelian wall, sections of which can still be seen after two millennia. It is also not far from the Porta (Gate) of San Pancrazio, a stopping place for many a tourist bus, for the view of Rome is spectacular. On a September evening nearly a decade ago, while my wife and I were in Rome, we invited my former embassy assistant, an Italian, to dinner, and when she suggested Scarpone, we jumped at the opportunity. Then Michela asked if she could bring a friend, to which I agreed; we all were to rendezvous at the restaurant. Shortly after we were seated, Michela and her “friend” arrived. He was wearing a sport shirt, so I was surprised when I learned that he was a Catholic priest, an American Jesuit named Fr. Gerald P. Fogarty. As the night progressed, he described the effort made by the Vatican to provide information to the International Catholic-Jewish Historical Committee, of which he had been an appointed member and created to evaluate a collection of Vatican documents on Pope Pius XII’s actions during the Holocaust. What follows is a summary of our conversation during that dinner. Albeit a decade ago, I remember much of it. (N.B.: I recently contacted Fr. Fogarty, who is the William Kenan Professor of U.S. Catholic History at the University of Virginia, and he confirmed my recollection of that night’s conversation.)

Fr. Fogarty told of the pressure placed on the Vatican by various international organizations over time to convince first Pope Paul VI and then Pope John Paul II that a joint committee, consisting of both Vatican appointees and those chosen by Jewish organizations, needed to be formed to help resolve, once and for all, the question that had dogged the Church for decades: was there historical documentation that Pope Pius XII had done all that he could to save European Jews from their fatal trip to the death camps? Or was there evidence, hidden in the archives, that contradicted such a statement? During our conversation, I mentioned to Fr. Fogarty that while I served at the U.S. Embassy to The Holy See, we were under instruction from Washington that when any Jewish group came from the U.S. to visit the Holy Father, it should be afforded every opportunity to gain immediate access to a meeting with the pope. That instruction was agreed to by the Vatican, which, of course, included Pope John Paul II’s consent, and did not apply to any other group.

Fr. Fogarty went on to describe the open resistance from some American Jewish Congress members who refused to believe that the documents given to them to review were the sum total of what existed in the Vatican archives. I recall that Fr. Fogarty’s comment was: “No matter what we did, it was never enough. There was always,



‘What are you hiding?’” What had brought about this turnaround: from Pius XII receiving accolades for his wartime efforts, to a reluctance to believe that he had been relentless in his efforts to save Jews and others? And why would the Vatican, a sovereign nation, allow its archives to be reviewed by total strangers? In international diplomatic circles, such a concession is hardly a common practice. Perhaps the origin of this quandary is to be found not in the Vatican archives, but in a theatrical production of the London and Broadway stages.

In the penultimate chapter of his book, *The Defamation of Pope Pius XII*, Professor McNerny proposes an answer: the play, *The Deputy*. McNerny attempts to unravel the reasons why the play’s author, Rolf Hochhuth, set out to write such a fictitious version of history. Did Hochhuth believe that as there is one head of the Church, that German Catholics obeyed their leader the way that the Nazi Party members obeyed theirs? Or was it the influence of a German historian, Gerald Reitlinger, who, in a letter to Hochhuth, wrote: “I do not think this need have happened if there had been a better pope.” And McNerny notes that one cannot discard the possibility that Hochhuth’s participation, at the age of 9 or 10 in the German *Jungevolk*, had some bearing on his future outlook. “With the crushing defeat of Germany, and given his view of collective guilt, an enormous burden of shame descended upon young Rolf Hochhuth.”

After its opening in London in 1963, in February of the following year, *The Deputy* - now reduced to a three-hour drama, half of its original length - opened in New York City; it ran for 316 performances, and closed in November. My wife and I saw the play in which the distinguished English actor, Emlyn Williams, portrayed Pius XII. Even after 50 years, the dramatic impact of the play still resonates, and I can only speculate how many people that night left the Brooks Atkinson Theatre convinced that “Pius XII could have done more to save the Jews,” for that was the central theme of the play.

McNerny’s book was published in 2001, and he died in 2010, but several events occurred between those years that have added to his support of Pope Pacelli. Among the most important was the revealing of what had been known as “Operation Seat 12.” And therein lies a tale. In 2007, the former

head of the Romanian secret police, Gen. Ion Mihai Pacepa, who had defected to the West in 1978, revealed the existence of Operation Seat 12, a disinformation campaign of communist propaganda during the Cold War which targeted the Vatican because of its outspoken anti-communism. The plot originated in February 1960, when Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev authorized a covert plan to discredit the Vatican’s moral authority in Western Europe through a campaign of disinformation of which Pope Pius XII was the primary target. The motto of “Operation Seat 12,” which may have been an oblique reference to the dozen apostles, was “Dead men cannot defend themselves;” Pius XII had died in 1958.

Pacepa claimed that General Ivan Agayants, chief of the KGB’s Disinformation Department, created the outline for what was to become *The Deputy*, which portrayed the Pope as a Nazi sympathizer, and that the basic research was done not by its claimed author Rolf Hochhuth, but by KGB agents. When Agayants visited Bucharest in 1963, he informed Pacepa that the disinformation campaign had “materialized into a powerful play attacking Pope Pius XII,” whose dialogue included a false rendering of documents Pacepa’s agents, disguised as Romanian seminarians, had purloined from the Vatican. Pacepa also related that in 1974, Yuri Andropov, former head of the KGB, admitted that had the Soviets known in 1963 what they knew in 1974 (due to newly released information that Hitler was hostile to, and plotted against, Pius XII) they would never have attacked the pope. Yet, despite all this, the campaign against Pope Pacelli continued. But what of the committee? And therein lies another tale.

In response to the Hochhuth/KGB play, Pope Paul VI in 1964 asked a team of three historians, the Rev. Pierre Blet, S.J., the Rev. Burkhardt Schneider, S.J., and the Rev. Angelo Martini, S.J., to conduct research in the Vatican archives and publish the relevant documents from the war years. A few years later, the three Jesuits were joined by the Rev. Robert A. Graham, S.J., the author of an acclaimed book about Vatican diplomacy. The first of eleven volumes was published in 1965; the last in 1981. It must be mentioned here that in October 1967, the beginning of the process of the canonization of Pope Pacelli started. To claim that the time was inopportune is an understatement. Known by the term, “*Actes*,” the

documents revealed that until his death in August 1944, Vatican Secretary of State Luigi Cardinal Maglione, the first person to see the Pope every morning, frequently instructed the Vatican’s diplomatic representatives in many Nazi-occupied and Axis nations, including Japan, to intervene on behalf of endangered Jews (emphasis mine), which continued after Maglione’s death, his successor sending out similar instructions until the end of the war. Where, pray tell, did those instructions come from?

In 1998, Cardinal Edward Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council on Relations with the Jews, proposed the creation of a joint panel of Catholic and Jewish scholars to study the *Actes*. At first, Jewish groups rejected the offer, insisting that until “independent researchers” were given free entrée, which would include carte blanche access to all of the Vatican’s archives, Pius XII’s role during the Holocaust “will remain an enigma.” The implication was that the four Jesuit editors might have hidden and/or refused to publish incriminating documents. A year later, Seymour Reich, Chairman of the Jewish Committee for Inter-Religious Tolerance, changed his mind and agreed to participate in a gathering of scholars who would look into the documents. Three Jewish scholars were selected, all of whom had previously criticized Pius XII in their writings and public statements; three Catholic scholars, amongst them Rev. Fogarty, were also chosen.

In October 2000, although no formal meeting was ever held, the Jewish members of the group released a statement that was sent to Cardinal Cassidy. It stated, “No edited collection can put such an important historical issue definitely to rest,” and then added, “**It is plain from the [*Actes*] that important pieces of the historical puzzle are missing from that collection.**” The rest, as they say, is history: on July 23, 2001, Reich announced the suspension of Jewish participation in the committee. In his recent message to me, Fr. Fogarty wrote: “Some of the Jewish members wanted immediate access to the archives, and not merely to what had been published. This ultimately led to the dissolution of the committee.”

One could argue that these demands could be described as *chutzpah*. It has been noted by a writer who has followed these matters closely, Dimitri Cavalli, that Fr. Fogarty was the most sensible member of the group when the American Jesuit said that there were no “smoking guns” in the Vatican’s archives. But there were still more obstacles in the path of Pope Pacelli’s canonization.

Prof. McNerny lists additional barriers that have been placed in the path of canonization, mainly through the written word, and by writers he describes as Catholic anti-Catholics. Amongst them are the usual suspects:

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This Month in History...

CHRISTMAS, 800

By John Rao, Ph.D.

Christmastide, 800, was the season that Charles the Great, the King of the Franks, was crowned Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III in the Eternal City. It was the season in which the Triple Alliance of Christianity, Roman culture and the Germans—whose most important tribe was the Franks—was solemnly confirmed. Indeed, it was the season in which a stamp of approval was placed upon the entire direction of medieval Catholic civilization in the heart of the Christian camp itself. And because of what it was, Christmastide, 800 still remains a beacon light for Catholics in December of 2014.

True, the reader who investigates the events of Christmastide, 800, as they happened, may initially be disappointed. After all, he will observe these events hardly unfolded in any clear and consistent fashion, and their exact character has been debated for the past 1214 years. Scholars have wondered whether Charles the Great's ever desired the bestowal of this honor in Rome. They have asked if Pope Leo III planned it in order to forestall a self-coronation by Charles that might have symbolized a relegation of the Papacy to a subordinate role in western life. Many have tried to determine whether Charles was ultimately flattered or displeased by the gesture, and to imagine what it was that the Romans thought about the revival of an Empire that a number of them, still loyal to Constantinople, did not

even consider to be dead. In short, given the confused and potentially divisive character of Christmastide, 800, the intelligent reader might understandably accuse me of over-dramatizing its ultimate significance.

This understandable accusation would, I think, be false. It would be false, first of all, because of the fact that the importance of any given event is rarely clear, in all its facets, as it takes place. How frequently do actions that seemed to have been crucial at the moment in which they were undertaken, appear, later, to have been nothing other than groundless illusions with no meaning at all? And how often, in contrast, does a decision made confusedly, under the pressure of circumstances and with a variety of motives in mind, seem, after a while, to have really been the logical conclusion of a series of previous steps; to have been firmly-rooted in well-tilled soil? I would argue that the confusion of Christmastide, 800, masked a logic that was centuries-long in its development.

The events of Christmastide, 800, however bewildering in their initial appearance, were clearly the solemn confirmation of a Triple Alliance conceived in the 490's in the former Roman province of Gaul. Gaul had witnessed the settlement of Germanic allies of Rome within its borders during the Fourth Century and the invasion of a number of German enemies in the next. All these various tribes began battling among themselves for supremacy as the imperial government collapsed.

Their conflicts were watched with a certain indifference by the Gallo-Roman population, which felt that it would lose, regardless of the group of barbarians that triumphed. None of the Germans were Catholics; they were all either pagans or Arian heretics. None had a real sense of the spirit that moved classical civilization, or a grasp of its laws, its art and its philosophy. War was their occupation, just as war was their sport. Classicism and Christianity were the inevitable victims in this reign of the gladiators.

Clovis, the King of the Franks, a tribe which had moved into Gaul as Roman allies, began to change the picture radically. He may or may not have had religious sentiments; he may or may not have appreciated Roman culture. Clovis definitely did want one thing, though. He wished to see the strength of his tribe increase. Moreover, he felt that he had found a key to this end in the acceptance of Catholicism. Catholic Baptism would signify association not simply with orthodoxy, but, because of Christian connection with the Empire, union with the Roman imperial ideal also. The result might well be to galvanize an indifferent local population for the support of his particular German tribe as its friend and protector. Clovis and the Franks did enter the Church; many Gallo-Romans did, thus, rally to their cause; a Triple Alliance had indeed been conceived.

Conception is not birth, however, and the Alliance conceived by Clovis caused western Europe a long and



King Clovis

difficult pregnancy. Rome was not built in a day, and it proved to be impossible to construct either Rome or a Catholic sense of things in Frankish Gaul overnight. Neither Clovis nor his descendents were able to create a legal, cultural and religious order that might begin to please a serious Roman or a serious Catholic. Barbarous concepts began to corrupt Christian teachings and practices. There was no development of a state administration worthy of the Roman name. The Merovingian Dynasty, as Clovis' line was known, could not even sustain itself, and became more inbred and more incompetent as time went on.

Assistants to the king, called Mayors of the Palace, soon found themselves doing the job of the useless Merovingian monarchs. The task of Mayor gradually fell into the hands of another family, the Carolingian. One of the Carolingian Mayors, Pepin, was responsible for finally "delivering" the Alliance that was floundering in the medieval European womb. Pepin, by the 740's and 750's, wished to have the title of King of the Franks, since he was already doing the work that this entailed. He knew that the prestige of his father, Charles the Hammer, who had thrown back the Moslem invasion of Gaul in the 730's, had given his family great stature among the Frankish warriors. Yet something more than military prestige was needed to secure the title from an already reigning chieftain-king. That something else, he felt, was a more serious and explicit tie with the Church and with the mission of Rome.

Both the Church and Rome needed something from Pepin at the same time. St. Boniface, the Benedictine Apostle to the Germans, wished protection from the tribe of the Saxons, which was placing serious obstacles in the path of his work of conversion. He also wanted a chance for the Benedictines and the Benedictine spirit to reform the corrupted Church of the Frankish Kingdom, and give it a real Catholic sense. Such a reform would inevitably strengthen Roman influence among the Franks, since St. Benedict's Rule was a model of classical concepts of balance and law. Pepin had the ability to respond to both of Boniface's desires.

Moreover, Rome, now ruled by the Popes, was desperately in search of a shield and a buckler. The tribe of

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In Defense of Papa Pacelli

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James Carroll and John Cornwell, both of whom not only wish to criticize the Church, but to undermine its basic doctrinal framework as well.

Carroll, a laicized priest, wrote in *American Requiem* (1996) that he, "loved being a priest and that his ministry had been an effort to redeem the cruel myopia of the Counter-Reformation Church." But Carroll's "prolonged whine" (McInerny's words) did not seem to offend those who awarded him the National Book Award for best memoir. He is still the "go-to guy" when a Church critic is needed by the media.

As to John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope* (1999), the book was so inaccurate and outrageous in its claim that Pope Pacelli collaborated with the Nazis that after Fr. Peter Gumpel, Pius XII's "postulator," skewered these false claims Cornwell was later to "modify" his meaning. Perhaps in his time at the Vatican archives Cornwell missed the memo that the Nazi Central Security Office wrote after examining Pius XII's 1942 Christmas message: "In a manner never known before, the Pope has repudiated the National Socialist New European Order. Here he is virtually accusing the German people of injustice toward the Jews and makes himself the mouthpiece of the Jewish war criminals."

Despite the public record which includes the estimate of the Israeli historian, Pinchas Lapide, that Pius XII was responsible for saving more than 850,000 Jews (no typo), the baseless charges against Pope Pacelli persist. McInerny: "The motives of Pius XII, against everything we know of the man, have been questioned. He is portrayed as the willing and approving facilitator of Nazi policies. This is calumny. This is defamation."

The record will speak for itself, which is why Fr. Gumpel is optimistic that Pope Pius XII will eventually be canonized. I hope he is right, but as late as 2005, the Vatican Nuncio in Israel walked out of an art exhibit at the Yad Vashem Museum that portrayed the pope in less than flattering terms, and the organizers refused to make any changes. That does not augur well, although many Orthodox rabbis have been strong defenders of the late pope. Even Pope Benedict's 2009 declaration calling Pius XII "Venerable" caused a furious reaction in the U.S.

In late November of this year, Pope Francis I, using "an accelerated procedure," canonized six new saints, but stated that "we will wait and see" when it comes to Pope Pacelli. Dimitri Cavalli, who is writing a bio of Pope Pius XII, summarized the situation well: "Perhaps only in a backward world such as ours would the one man who did more

than any other wartime leader to help Jews and other Nazi victims, receive the greatest condemnation."

But no description of the wartime efforts of Pope Pius XII would be complete without a little known episode, one which is rarely mentioned, and involves the pontiff and the then Chief Rabbi of Rome, Israel Zolli. Prior to the war, he had come to know the pontiff well, and in one incident during the occupation of Rome involving Nazi ransom demands of gold for lives, Zolli was assured by Vatican officials that they would put up the amount necessary. The Israeli historian, Lapide, claims that 90% of Rome's Jews lived through the war, but then rhetorically asks: would they have survived had the pope been more openly strident in his denunciations of the Nazis?

Perhaps in recognition of Pius XII's great work as a humanitarian, or his personal magnetism, at the end of the war the Rabbi Zolli informed the Pope of his desire to convert, along with his wife and daughter. For his baptismal name, Zolli took the name Eugenio Maria, the first two names of Pope Pius XII. That event says a great deal about Pope Pacelli, and is another reason why, recognized or not, Pius XII should be a saint of the Church, and I am absolutely certain that Professor McInerny would totally agree. ■

CHRISTMAS, 800

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the Lombards was ravaging Italy and threatening the Eternal City. Rome's former protectors, the Eastern Roman Emperors, troubled by almost constant Moslem incursions, could no longer be called upon to perform this function. The Papacy was not even certain that it wanted them to do so, given the fact that they had adopted the Iconoclast, or image-smashing heresy, and had begun to punish Rome in a variety of ways, economic as well as spiritual, for not following them down this unfortunate pathway. Perhaps, the popes reasoned, a German tribe seeking to bind itself to the Roman ideal might be trusted where New Rome, Constantinople, had failed.

Pepin, Boniface, and the Papacy seized their opportunity. The Benedictine Rule conquered the Frankish realm. Pepin offered the Benedictines assistance outside its borders. Rome gave him permission to replace his Merovingian predecessor on grounds of incompetence. Pepin promised to deal with the Lombards. St. Boniface, and then Pope Stephen II, made the long journey to the court of Pepin to give ceremonial form to the deposition and the Carolingian assumption of power. The new King of the Franks was anointed in the manner of David, who was marked out by Samuel as the replacement for Saul. Pepin swore an oath to defend the Faith, and, with it, therefore, the Roman order that Christianity had incorporated into its life and law. Frankish warriors expressed their approval when the ceremony was concluded. The Alliance conceived by Clovis, but left floundering in its womb by his descendents, had been brought into the light of day.

Charles the Great was Pepin's son. He took it upon himself to complete his father's work. This he did with a fury, and sometimes in unacceptable fashion. He defeated the Lombards and made himself their king. He devastated the Saxons and had them baptized. Benedictine monasteries were founded and funded by him throughout his domains. An attempt was made to provide serious education for the clergy, and to raise the moral and cultural level of the active population as a whole. Even Charles' failures, such as his inability to penetrate deeply into Moslem Spain, provided Western Christendom with some of its greatest chivalric legends for the future. It was thus only fitting that his work be rewarded by his coronation as Roman Emperor in Christmastide, 800. And it is thus only fitting that that coronation be seen as the confirmation of the Alliance conceived by Clovis and given birth to by Pepin.

But there is a second and perhaps more profound reason for underlining the significance of the events of Christmastide, 800. This is the fact that historical actions can have a symbolic meaning distinct from their literal sense. It can sometimes even be the symbolic meaning that has the greater influence upon the future of the world.

Western History is filled with illustrations of this truth. Rome, to take but one conspicuous example, conquered the Mediterranean world for a wide variety of less than elevated motives. The logic of its self-interested actions can be demonstrated through

the confusion of events, just as the logic of the coronation of Charles the Great can be traced back to the decisions of Clovis and Pepin. How have the literal motives responsible for Rome's conquests actually influenced the movement of history? Little at all. One cannot say the same for the symbolic meaning of its victories. This was outlined by Greek historians like Polybius, who emphasized Rome's character as a place of law, order, and justice, and her mission to conquer in order to spread these same goods to the rest of the world. The works written by such historians were used to educate the children of Roman notables. Subsequent generations thus publicly spoke as though this mission of law, order and justice were indeed the reason for the growth of the Empire. Rome became a concrete model for international organization and justice by no means warranted by its original intentions and activity. It is in this form that Rome continues to have meaning for us today.

It seems to me that there is an enormously important symbolic meaning in the events of Christmastide, 800 as well, indicated both by the way in which the Triple Alliance evolved and the season chosen for its solemn confirmation. The symbolic meaning of these events ought to be able to move us, in our own troubled day, to the same kind of creative ventures that it moved the Triple Alliance itself.

What is it that distinguished Charles the Great, and, before him, Pepin, Clovis, and the Franks as a whole? What is it that set St. Boniface and the Benedictines apart? What is it that characterized the popes active in the work of the Alliance? What did they all symbolize? Courageous affirmation, commitment and action; courage in the midst of brutal realities that would have led others to despair. The conditions for creating a new civilization, for giving life to a Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation were horrendous. They would have made a Mario Cuomo wring his hands in anguish. The half-barbaric Franks still had little idea of the real significance of the Roman outlook at the time of Charles' coronation. Greco-Roman conceptions of the state as an organized, administrative entity that provided for the common good and continued beyond the lifetime of a given conquering chieftain remained quite alien to them. St. Boniface, more than anyone, knew the crudity of this people and the arbitrariness of its leaders. The papacy was all too aware of the dangers that might result from Frankish domination and barbarization. No one need have done anything, given the risks. Men often have preferred to go down to destruction rather than alter one scene in a familiar picture. Germanic stupidities could easily have been taken as an excuse to avoid contact with the Franks entirely, and to yearn for some future Eastern Roman aid. Men might have gathered in St. Peter's during a Lombard invasion and waited for an angel to save them, as the population of Constantinople gathered in Hagia Sophia during the Turkish sack centuries later. The weakness of Rome and of the Christian position could readily have been used by the Franks to justify rejection of both. Men of strength have frequently crushed what was fragile and difficult to understand. But Charles and Leo, Pepin, Boniface and Stephen were

men of courage, of affirmation and of action. They did not deny the magnitude of their problems; they simply chose to confront them rather than to run.

The courage of these people, their acceptance of opportunities and labors against appalling odds, can be seen in the work of Charles the Great and Alcuin, the Benedictine scholar, with regard to education. Charles himself, as his biographer notes, could never master the alphabet, much less grasp the wisdom of the ages. His Frankish subjects were, for the most part, infinitely more barbaric. Few places, with the possible exception of a contemporary American university, could have offered a more dismal prospect for intellectual development than the Kingdom of the Franks. But Charles, nevertheless, wanted learning, and called Alcuin from England to head a Benedictine school at Aix-la-Chapelle, the Frankish capital. And Alcuin responded by presenting a breathtaking vision of what might be achieved. He wrote to Charles of the hope of establishing nothing less than a New Athens in the Kingdom of the Franks. This New Athens, he explained, would be infinitely greater than the Athens of old, because of the fact that the modern center of learning would have more than the teachings of Plato and Aristotle to inspire it. It would be illumined, in addition, by the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit. Alcuin envisaged an expanding intellectual universe in the center of what was, at the moment, nothing more than a Kingdom of Gladiators! The present realities of this world of warriors would have made other wise men tremble rather than act. But the "realists" were correct only in the short run; St. Thomas, the University of Paris, Chartres, Giotto and Dante show us who was actually right. Christmastide was also the symbolically-appropriate season in which to confirm the Triple Alliance. Why? Because the Christmas story demonstrates that courageous affirmation, commitment and action in the midst of brutal realities are built into the divine plan as a whole. There are innumerable fearless "leaps" indicated in the events surrounding Christ's birth and earliest days. They begin in the supernatural realm. God the Father courageously committed Himself to His own Creation, knowing that this dedication would lead to His Son's torture and death. He accepted the fact that the Divine Word would enter the world not in glory and power, as was His due, but through a poor and humble woman, and as a helpless child. Mary courageously allowed a pregnancy whose full consequences she did not understand, and Joseph stood by her in circumstances that must have been baffling to him. Both grasped perfectly only one thing: the misery that the apparent dishonor involved would entail them.

One example of courageous affirmation and commitment that forms part of the Christmas story stands out as most germane to my present argument. This is the fearless dedication to the Christ child of the Three Wise Men of the Orient, who represent both kingly power and learning. It is one of the great ironies of existence that those most interested in power often refuse to take the steps that can make their strength endure for generations. The military man and the statesman often reject contemptuously the serious wisdom that would root their work in a great mission and give it staying power. We are told that the Three

Wise Men were kings. As kings, they had risen above the temptation to rely on brute force alone. They had allied their strength with learning.

Another of life's great ironies is the fact that those most interested in the search for truth are often the least willing to commit themselves to it when it is discovered. The life of learning is often accompanied by a paralysis of the will. This is partly due to the scholar's knowledge of the complexities of reaching definite conclusions, and partly the cause of a fear that his own importance will diminish should truth be actually attained. Paralysis frequently ends in ridicule of the whole concept of truth, especially if truths are presented from humble and non-academic sources.

All this makes the actions of the Three Wise Men the more brilliant. They came from the cradle of civilization, and carried with them the esoteric wisdom of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt and Persia. It is also possible to take them as being symbols of ancient Greek wisdom and its problems, since the East had been partially Hellenized after Alexander the Great's conquests. Such men could have been expected to stay at home, continue their research and await workshop reports after noticing the Star of Bethlehem. Instead, the Three Wise Men took to the road. They may have had endless discussions over the meaning of it all on the way to Bethlehem. But when they arrived, the representatives of an often paralytic enterprise bent their knees. The emissaries of the cradle of civilization eagerly paid homage before the cradle of a new, higher and decisive civilizing force. The Wise Men, violating all of the best principles of academic objectivity, abandoning all the arrogance of political and military might, placed their wisdom and strength at the service of a helpless child; a helpless child cared for by poor, dishonored parents, who were away from home at the bidding of a distant emperor. Not even a scholar! Not even a conqueror! What of the ridicule of fellow kings and fellow wise men before their action? What of the possible conflicts of human knowledge and faith, of state and church? Later, the Wise Men, in a sense, answered. We will work them out later. The Truth is there before us in human form, and He has promised not to reject us, so long as we accept Him. Our future difficulties must not prevent our present abandonment to the Truth.

Sometimes one sees paintings in which the Three Wise Men are joined by others in their homage to the Christ child. I should like to think that their entourage consisted of men and women who had been tempted by life's risks and horrors to run, to hide and to despair. I should also like to think that these men and women were encouraged by the courageous commitment of the representatives of learning and power to embrace life's risks in the Truth. After all, three kings stood before them who had not been deterred from combining knowledge and power, despite the obvious problems involved. These same kings were now ready to unite such explosive forces with courageous affirmation of the helpless Christ child. If they were not afraid, either of the world or of God, why should anyone else be? Why flee from love, because of the dangers of loving properly, or from sex, because of its possible abuse, or marriage, because divorce and cynicism

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The Last Word...

Would the Antichrist Clown Around?

By Father Celatus

Advent is the season of preparation for Christmas but it is only in the final days preceding the Feast itself that the readings of the Mass focus upon the events most immediately related to the birth of Jesus Christ. The Gospel reading of the First Sunday of Advent, in fact, focuses upon a subsequent coming of Christ:

At that time, Jesus said to His disciples: There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations bewildered by the roaring of sea and waves; men fainting for fear and for expectation of the things that are coming on the world; for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the son of Man coming upon a cloud with great power and majesty. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand. And He spoke to them a parable. Behold the fig tree, and all the trees. When they now put forth their buds, you know that summer

is near. Even so, when you see these things coming to pass, know that the kingdom of God is near. Amen I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all things have been accomplished. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

Among the Fathers of the Church and many other saintly preachers these words of our Lord have been interpreted to refer to the past destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD as well as the future end of the world. The destruction of the once Holy City at the hands of the pagan Romans prefigured the final apocalypse. With this Gospel theme in mind and the end of another calendar year approaching, no wonder many Christians and Protestants are thinking apocalyptically in the Advent and Christmas seasons. Add to this the pontificate of Bishop of Rome Francis and you have ingredients for a full scale apocalyptic nightmare.

What has Francis to do with the Apocalypse? Maybe much or maybe nothing at all. Time will tell but even before Jorge Bergoglio was elected to

the Petrine office there was speculation in some quarters that whoever was selected as Benedict's successor would be the final pope. This is based in part upon a prophecy that is alleged to have originated with Saint Malachy of the twelfth century. This prophecy, discovered centuries later, lists 112 popes from the Saint's time until the end of time. Pope Benedict was number 111 according to the prophecy and his successor would therefore be the last of all the popes.

To add fuel to the apocalyptic fire the new pope chose the name Francis, unprecedented for a pope and unexpected for a Jesuit. There exists an alleged apocalyptic prophecy associated with the Saint of Assisi:

At the time of this tribulation a man, not canonically elected, will be raised to the Pontificate, who, by his cunning, will endeavor to draw many into error... There will be such diversity of opinions and schisms among the people... for in those days Jesus Christ will send them not a true Pastor, but a destroyer.

Regardless of whether the centuries old prophecies attributed to Saints Malachy and Francis are authentic the apocalyptic buzz about Francis is not likely to subside anytime soon. Why not? Because the words and actions of this Bishop of Rome are outright unconventional and downright frightening, not only to traditional Catholics but to many Protestants who strive sincerely to remain biblically based and morally sound. Among these there is talk of the possibility that Francis may be a False Prophet of the Antichrist! Just what is their basis for proposing this pope of the Catholic Church as a candidate for a False Prophet?

Let's start with the issue of religious liberty, the novel view rooted in the Second Vatican Council that a person has an innate right to choose his own religion; put another way, a person has a right to reject true religion. Worse yet, the twisted view that false religions can themselves be salvific and that there are pathways to Heaven outside of the Church and apart

from Christ. Things were bad enough when a previous pope kissed a Koran and went to Assisi for interreligious prayer but this pope has brought the infidels right into the walls of the Vatican and the godless into the House of God. Confused as they are about the nature of the Church, at least some Protestants recognize that salvation is not possible except through Jesus Christ. Would that Bishop of Rome Francis and the modernists professed the same!

Another reason apocalyptically inclined Protestants believe that Francis may be a False Prophet regards his focus upon globalism. While Bishop of Rome Francis has condemned modern societies for what he calls a "globalization of indifference" many worry that he himself has a radical vision of global unity that could pave the way for the rise of the ultimate Antichrist to universal power and influence over the world. They recognize that a wildly popular pope voted *Man of the Year* by the world is grave cause for concern.

A third basis for apocalyptic concerns about this pope among conservative Protestants regards his compromising words and actions related to sexual morality, starting with the now famous papal question "Who am I to judge" regarding active homosexuals and extending up through the recent Synod on the Family, which was more like a *Synod on Sex*. Even biblically based Protestants know that divorce and remarriage is unlawful and sinful and that active homosexuality is a perversion that warrants damnation.

There are other reasons for which at least some Catholics and Protestants have speculated that Francis may be an apocalyptic False Prophet. What do I believe? Well, two years ago I raised the question of whether President Obama could be the Antichrist and concluded probably not. For when the Antichrist comes, will he need a teleprompter? On the other hand, Francis never uses a teleprompter—if only he would! So might not this Bishop of Rome be a False Prophet? Who knows? Then again, when the False Prophet emerges in service of the ultimate Antichrist, will he be wearing a clown nose? Probably not! ■

CHRISTMAS, 800

Continued...

are everywhere to be feared? Why hide from song and dance, from art and beauty, from the table and the vineyard, simply due to the risk of their misuse? Bring them courageously into the sight of the living God, who will not reject them, so long as He is accepted. Embrace the world in Christ, and begin the adventure of life. The future difficulties will be worked out along the road.

I would paint an extremely crowded canvas of the visit of the Wise Men to Bethlehem. I would draw behind the Magi the joyous faces of representatives of all aspects and walks of life; the joyous faces of all those who had realized that courageous commitment to the Son of God gave them the chance—their only real change—to embrace life, despite life's brutal realities. In the distance, I would draw the Coronation of Charles the Great, and, behind this scene, the fruits of the courageous affirmation that it symbolized, Christian civilization in all its glory. Finally, far away from the rest, I would sketch in the Heavenly Jerusalem. Because God's reward for courageous affirmation of life in the Truth is eternity.

The Christmas story need not have taken place at all. The Wise Men might have been frightened by the risks entailed for their reputation and power, and never set out on their journey. No crowd would have gathered to follow them. Joseph might have abandoned Mary: too much trouble and little happiness with that woman! Mary could have asked for some type of insurance policy from God. The Father might, with full justification, have admitted that His Creation was a cynic's delight, and left it on its own. There would have been no painting, no coronation, no Christian civilization, no

Heavenly Jerusalem. For the prize for failure to affirm life in the Truth, with all its risks and hardships, is eternal death. Christmas was, indeed, the perfect season in which to crown Charles the Great as Roman Emperor. Charles' coronation was, indeed, the symbol of a Triple Alliance of courageous commitment long in preparation. That courageous commitment remains the symbolic truth of the entire event. And what meaning does it have for us today? It has a meaning greater than perhaps ever before.

There is no more hopeless situation than the one that Christendom faces now. Everything that Christianity stands for is, for all intents and purposes, in ruins. Modern life is one enormous danger and risk. Even the simple things of life have become poisonous. It is enormously tempting for Catholics to run and hide from the world, as though the world and the world's wonders were our mortal enemies. Christmastide, 800, tells us something different. It tells us to rush in where "wise men" less sage than the eastern kings fear to tread. The work of our noble and courageous ancestors reminds us that the Christ child is still there, and that with orthodoxy and a little backbone, there is nothing in this entire universe that we need fear. What will our Christian commitment to this world produce? No one knows. I assure you that everyone, from St. Augustine to Charles the Great, would have been mightily surprised by the character of the High Middle Ages. Christmastide, 800, teaches us to march courageously into 1985, a full supply of weapons and handkerchiefs in hand (for evils and tears one will encounter therein), shouting the same acclamations sung by the Carolingians themselves: *Christus vinict, Christus regnat, Christus imperat!* ■



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