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Personality of Pope Benedict

As our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XV., is now the central figure in the eyes of the whole world, especially since he made definite proposals of peace to the belligerent nations which they carefully considered, the following intimate pen picture of the interesting personality of the great Father of Christendom, written by the Roman correspondent of The Rosary Magazine, will be welcomed by Journal readers.

As the central figure of the Christian world the personality of our Holy Father Benedict XV. could not hope to escape the closest scrutiny. The world even now has hardly recovered from the surprise occasioned by his selection for the august chair of St. Peter. When the holy Pius X laid down his life as a peace offering for Europe, there were trained diplomats, skilled in the art of reading the political future, who picked out probable candidates for the Pontifical Office. Cardinals whose years of service were long and whose achievements were notable, were heralded as likely successors to Pius X. No one thought of the frail, retiring Archbishop of Bologna, whose admittance to the Sacred College dated back only six months. No one dreamed that a Pope would be chosen from among the recently created Cardinals. But if ever the Italian adage, "Who enters the conclave as Pope comes out as Cardinal," was borne out in a most striking manner, it was surely in the last Papal election which placed Benedict XV. upon the Fisherman's throne.

Very few people at large knew much, if anything at all, beyond his name, Cardinal della Chiesa. Even among ecclesiastics few had any intimate knowledge of him. It was generally known that his career at Rome, after his ordination to the priesthood, had not been by any means distinguished by tenure of high office. The positions which he held in the Roman Curia were very inferior positions. The diplomatic posts which he filled abroad were not of the first importance. But every one who had any knowledge of Monsignor della Chiesa knew that he was first and always and everywhere a man of hard work. His days as a young priest in the employ of the Curia were filled with the most exhausting labors. For years he was almost literally chained to his desk. It was probably his devotion to his work, and also his far-reaching vision that drew upon him the attention of the late Cardinal Rampolla, whose pupil he became and whose confidences he shared. From this expert, well-tried diplomatist, he could not but gather hints and suggestions of a practical kind which, being put to use, developed to the highest point of efficiency the native acumen of his mind.

After having waited an unusually long time for recognition of his labors and his services to the Church, Monsignor della Chiesa was some years ago appointed to the Archbishopric of Bologna. He entered the city of the hundred towers without much noise or demonstration. He simply took hold of the rudder which obedience had placed in his hand. It soon became evident, however, that he actually had taken possession of his See, for almost in the twinkling of an eye he had mastered the thousand and one problems that inevitably arise in an important diocese. Early and late, as Archbishop of Bologna, he was at his desk, studying for himself every phase of the questions that came up for consideration. Though kind and hospitable to a degree, he never mingled much with his clergy, being in this, as in every other respect, pre-eminently business-like. His doors were always open to the priests. But they had to state their business clearly and distinctly, and in a few words as possible. Then the Archbishop would retire to his study, with a kind invitation to his visitor to remain for dinner, if he could amuse himself in the interval.

It was only with the poor that he seemed to forget his business cares. When face to face with misery and

poverty he always forgot everything else. Most of all, he forgot his own interests. For it is a matter of history that he was always on the verge of bankruptcy because of his large charities to the poor. Coming, as he did, from a rich and noble family, his private resources were by no means small or insignificant. But his regular income soon faded under his hand, and the Marchioness, his good mother, was often approached with soul-harrowing tales of the poverty that was calling so loudly for relief. Her large bequest to the poor on hearing of her son's elevation to the Pontificate was not an isolated act, but rather a mother's way of best pleasing her child.

The Spartan simplicity of life which had always characterized him was continued, when, as the Vicar of Christ, he took possession of the largest, most splendid palace in the whole world. Benedict XV. literally lives in three small rooms—a simple study, with about six plain chairs and a large wooden desk, a bedroom with a simple couch, and an unostentatious living room. And his life was as simple as his surroundings. He is always up at 5 o'clock in order to make his preparation for Mass. One of his private chamberlains generally says a Mass which he attends. Then the Holy Father himself ascends the altar, and in dignified, holy, though brisk, manner offers up the Sacrifice. After his thanksgiving, he generally takes one cup of black coffee and a small piece of bread. Almost immediately he enters his study, where he is surrounded by four secretaries whom he keeps busily engaged until noon. There is no hurry or cyclonic haste anywhere. The Pope assigns tasks to each of his secretaries, and follows closely their every move. He is reputed to share with St. Thomas Aquinas the very unusual faculty of being able to dictate to four secretaries simultaneously.

His thin, rather shrill voice never loses its even pitch. Each word is clearly enunciated, also snapped out. The most remarkable thing about the Holy Father is the ease and moderation with which he does the most diverse things. He sees and hears and notes down mentally everything going on around him. Secretaries appear during his hours of labor from the Curia, or the Cancellaria with important documents, to each of which is pinned a slip of paper giving with almost telegraphic brevity its contents. With a single glance the Pope takes in every word and deposits the document in its proper place. To a man like this order is a prime requisite. One of the first things he did as Pontiff, they say, was to have an immense desk installed in his study to afford him room for the separate piles of documents and clipping which he always wishes to have before him. The Italians also say that he never mislays a paper.

It is not to be wondered at that business matters are never delayed at the Vatican under Benedict XV. Everything is taken care of systematically and methodically. Letters are never allowed to go unanswered. The Pope has always had the reputation of being a prompt correspondent and a great letter-writer, and he has not given up this habit with his accession to the great responsibilities of the supreme rulership of the Church. He writes a very legible, flowing, steady hand. An expert would call it a classic script. The characters are all well formed and boldly written. From his writing, it is apparent that he knows his own mind, and is ready to make it known to his correspondent. He writes with unusual celerity.

After a morning of such arduous labor, the Pontiff, passing through two files of kneeling Christians who have been gathered together from the whole world, wends his way to his mid-day luncheon. It is of the plainest kind, simple and substantial. After luncheon he again passes through files of pilgrims, anxious to get a glimpse of the great Father of Christendom. It is perhaps upon occasions like this we get the best impression of the Holy Father. Those who have had a private audience with him are all one in saying that in his public audiences he appears at his best. He has ears for everyone, and a kind word, especially for the children and the poorer pilgrims. He always says the right word, too, brief, no doubt, but always been the great passion of his life.

It is probably in the evening when he is alone, that the Holy Father pursues his private reading, which has always been the great passion of his life.



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POPE BENEDICT XV.

forever. When he has made the rounds, blessing right and left as he goes, the Pontiff retires for an hour's rest or siesta, as do all Italians and all foreigners in Italy who wish to enjoy good health. After this he descends by an elevator to the Cortile Belvedere where his carriage is awaiting him. Behind his two spirited black horses he drives through his fourteen acres of ground which constitute the Vatican gardens. It is safe to say that the Pope knows every inch of this garden. From his boyhood he has loved nature. Since these days when by the physician's orders he was sent into the country to grow strong, he has had a particular love for trees, and shrubs and flowers. He knows them all by name as any botanist might. It is generally known that as Archbishop of Bologna, he slipped away several times each year to the country home of a friend of boyhood days to enjoy unrestricted communion with nature. Therefore it was without surprise that the world learned that the famous Vatican gardens which Pius X. had greatly neglected, were amongst the first secular things to claim his attention. Those who have walked through the Vatican gardens in Pius X.'s time, and again in Benedict XV.'s time, will notice a very marked improvement. Of course, Italian gardens are never the prim, trim flower beds which we find in colder climates. In Italy any flower that reaches out for the sun's kiss, above its fellow, is allowed to stand. Here, then, during the short space of forty-five minutes the Pope takes his recreation with some trusted friend, walking amongst the flowers and shrubs, perhaps having a little chat with the gardener before being driven back to the palace.

The remainder of the day is taken up either with private audiences or business of State, until dinner is served at 7. This last repast of the day is no more tempting from an epicure's point of view than the other two. The Pope spends less than \$1.00 a day for his meals.

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The Church and the Orient

When one considers the importance of the fact that the Holy Father himself is to be Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Oriental Rites, the new congregation which His Holiness has just created, we can have no doubt the next few years will see a reconciliation of the Eastern churches with the Catholic Church. Though the new congregation will have to deal with only the Orientals who are in union with Rome, still its very existence will be an inducement to the schismatic branches to avail of the desire which the Holy See has always manifested to see them back in the true fold. Men's outlook on things religious has undergone a big change these three years of the European War. That bitterness with which the schismatics regarded the Roman Pontiffs has mellowed, and really there was plenty of room for improvement—for Protestants have not regarded the Holy See so harshly as have done the Greek Orthodox Christians and other bodies of a similar kind.

It would be too much to expect to see any marked return until the end of the World War, but we cannot put any limit to the hopes of a better understanding between the west and the east, owing to the recent changes in Russia. For just as individual Protestants usually recognize in the priest much more than they do in their own minister, so are whole "churches," whether schismatic or heretical, opening their eyes to the fact that, when all is said and done, the world hearkens only to the Church which Christ founded in St. Peter.

PROUD OF HIS FLOCK

It is with justifiable pride that Rev. S. J. Kelly, a Josephite Father, sends a photograph of a large group of children ready for receiving the Body of Our Lord for the first time. The location of this negro mission is in New Orleans. The Father says:

"I am sending a picture of the First Communion class of our mission. Two hundred and thirty-nine children received their first Holy Communion. I could have had four hundred, but it was impossible for me to get them ready."

"We had to move out into the yard on this occasion, because the little church could not hold them all at the same time. The yard makes an ideal church in the summer time, but the roof leaks so badly when it rains and the sun shines so hot when it doesn't rain."

"I started this mission last October. A kind friend gave me a plot of ground on which was a double one-story house. This house I turned into a temporary church. It measures 26 x 69 feet. Into this building I try to get as many as possible for four Masses on Sunday."

"I must have a church and school for these children. I appealed everywhere during the past year to raise enough money to start the work; but so far my appeal has failed to bear fruit. It is easy to turn a beggar away, but very hard for me to turn these little ones away when they come to me for the bread of life. But if those who refused me had to stand as I do every Sunday in this crowded building and see the little ones faint, while they are waiting to go to Holy Communion, their hearts would be touched by the pitiful cry of the fainting child, when it recovers and finds that its fast is broken, and so cannot go to Communion that day."

The Syro-Chaldean language, of the Semitic race, which at one time was spoken by 400 million people from Egypt to the Caucasus and from Palestine to the Persian Gulf, was the language of Our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin and of the Apostles.

The Catholic Employment Bureau of Chicago secured last year employment for about 2,000 persons.

The Ursuline Sisters of Louisville Motherhouse and Chapel are close by their fine Sacred Heart Academy.