

Catholic Courier

VOLUME XIV MAY 21, 1942 NUMBER 21

Official Newspaper of The Rochester Diocese
 With the Approbation of the
 MOST REVEREND JAMES EDWARD KEARNEY, D.D.
 Bishop of Rochester

The CATHOLIC COURIER has my most enthusiastic approval. A diocesan newspaper has become an essential part of the program of Catholic action in every diocese. The CATHOLIC COURIER should be found in every Catholic home in the diocese. I find it hard to understand how any Catholic can be so indifferent as to what is transpiring in his church throughout the world as to rely upon unreliable sources of information or even to seek no information whatever. Let us have a brief slogan "The CATHOLIC COURIER in every Catholic home."

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PENTECOST

Fifty days had gone by; forty since the Resurrection of Christ, ten more since the Ascension. Much had happened in those days. The people of Jerusalem, the people in far off Galilee, had seen the Risen Saviour, had heard Him speak. News of His resurrection had been carried by eyewitnesses far and wide, so that all Judea and Samaria and Galilee knew Christ had risen from the dead. God's Providence had seen to it that evidence of the Resurrection so clear and definite and convincing as to preclude any reasonable questioning concerning it, in these forty days, should be given to many witnesses: to the holy women, to the Apostles, to more than 500 at once; in many places; at the tomb in Jerusalem, in Emmaus, by the Sea of Galilee, on the Mount of the Ascension.

Recording of the fact of the Resurrection by these eyewitnesses, was cared for also by Divine Providence. The greatest fact in all the world was to be so carefully written down by four historians, that their words should stand as a document for all posterity to read and accept. Matthew and John, Mark and Paul, each in his own way was to preserve in a written record the evident fact of Christ's Resurrection from the dead.

Oneness of mind and heart had also been brought about in the Apostles. Christ had been with them frequently during this forty days. He found them divided, questioning each other in their thoughts and in their words. They had returned to Christ, to Jerusalem. At their return many still felt the work of Christ was to restore the Jewish Commonwealth, to restore the Kingdom of Israel. Christ's words had given them new knowledge, new training. At His command they were to wait in Jerusalem till the coming of the Holy Spirit.

And now the days of Pentecost were accomplished. Now the Apostles were together in one place. Now they were one in mind. Unanimity was in them the direct result of Christ's influence; they were one in mind because they had all received the same instructions and had accepted the same final training from their Master.

Then they received the Holy Ghost! God, the Holy Ghost, in the fullness of His divinity descended into their bodies and souls to dwell there, to enrich them with His seven gifts, to strengthen them for the work and suffering ahead, to enlighten their minds that they might never lose even one iota of the teachings of Christ, to give them the gift of tongues that their ministry of the word might be immediately effective among the nations of earth.

Pentecost is a day not only for the Apostles, but for all members of Christ's Church. The perfect society founded by Jesus Christ for the salvation of all men, on this day received the Holy Ghost, Who was to abide with it forever, guiding it in the way of holiness and truth; Who was to make and keep it One, Holy, Catholic, ever to the end of time. We partake of the blessings of the Holy Spirit by our membership in the Church. We consider this Birthday of the Church a day of outstanding significance for all of us. We see in it the beginning of our salvation.

CHARITY ACHIEVES ANOTHER VICTORY!

No member of the community is outside the rejoicing with which the success of the Community-War Chest was greeted this week. Charity has, indeed, won another victory! Because Charity is what is behind it all. All the organization in the world, all the budget committees, soliciting groups, accounting forces, could never produce this result were it not for the Charity of the individual subscriber. While we pay all the honor to the men and women who did the soliciting, while we marvel at the efficiency of the mechanical set up of the Chest, we still insist that Charity is the only word that can sum up the sublime record set before us this year.

Charity—love of God and love of our neighbor! An interest in our brother's welfare. Sympathy in its truest sense, suffering with him. Ministering to his wants, helping him prosper, placing before him the food and medicine and service he needs. Not in an impersonal way, not in an abstract manner; but because we see in him a brother under God, because we recognize and gladly fulfill our obligation to him.

All the cities of the diocese have their Community and War Chests. All care for their needy ones at home and abroad through one drive each year. All share with Rochester the happiness of seeing the Annual Chest Campaign a rousing success. God will surely bless those communities in which the virtue of Charity receives so practical an expression.

THE HOLY FATHER'S JUBILEE MESSAGE

Unfailing hope in God's Providence is the burden of the Jubilee Message of Pope Pius XII. Sorrow that is deep and lasting surrounds him as he sees his children set against one another. War and the tragedies that go with it are close to him always, because he as the Universal Father numbers his children in all the opposing camps and on all the battlefields. He knows the difficulties of hoping for an early peace. He sees clearly that the present day affords little in the way of human hope for such a peace.

Yet he hesitates not to place before the leaders of all the nations the plea to give every consideration to any opportunity that offers itself for the attainment of a just and lasting peace: a peace not

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MISSION SUNDAY OF THE SICK. On the Feast of Pentecost, Sunday, May 24, will be the eleventh annual observance. Typical of the day's significance is above painting by J. Watson Davis featuring official poster for the occasion issued by the National Society for the propagation of the Faith. Sufferings and prayers of the sick are offered for Christ's mission on pent Sunday.

—Sursum Corda—

Savonarola Again

By Rev. James M. Gillis, C.S.P.

Last week in this column I commenced to say something about "Savonarola," the play recently produced by the Blackfriars' Guild at their little theater in New York City "Commenced" is the word, because I had scarcely started when my space ran out.

I managed to get in a few words of praise of the play, and of its author, Father Urban Nagle, O.P., and was just about to present a few felicitations to the actors. Let me say now that they did a splendid piece of work, in fact the best I have ever seen in a play of that kind. But I must not once again use up a column without coming to what I think most important not the play or the writer of the play or the talent of the actors, but the theme, Savonarola himself.

In a couple of pages of preface to the play, Father Nagle confesses that he has ventured upon what some persons would call a "dangerous procedure." Some good folk, pious but timorous, may think it inadvisable to write a play around and about a friar who fell foul of the pope—and such a Pope: Alexander VI. But Father Nagle says, by way of justifying himself, that he brings "this firebrand (Savonarola) to the attention of the casual playgoer . . . because the problems he faced in civil reform are with us all over again."

To say "civil reform" is to understate the case. Say rather civil, religious and moral reform, and say not the reform of a city but of the world and a whole civilization. Savonarola, "the flame," as Father Nagle calls him (the same honorable epithet has been applied also to St. Catherine of Siena), had the courage to attempt to solve the problem of dealing with iniquity in high places, not only in Florence and in the Papal Court at Rome, but in all Italy and all the world.

There are two schools of thought in the matter of the desirability of attempting any such bold action. Perhaps we should say one school of thought and another school of action. Those who follow the school of thought generally go no further than thought. They are so strong for what they call prudence, they deliberate so long, they see so clearly the dangers that attach to any course of conduct, that they stand still in their tracks. Corruption is all around them; they see it; they deplore and lament and grieve over it; but they don't really do anything about it; or they do what they do so cautiously that they make no change in the situation. As a learned friend of mine is fond of explaining, if these people would read the Summa of St. Thomas on the virtue of "prudence" they would see that he speaks of prudence as a prelude to action. The over-cautious take prudence to be a substitute for action.

In Father Nagle's play, the protagonist of "prudence" is Ricardo, friar of San Marco, subject to Savonarola as his prior but superior to him in experience, worldly wisdom and knowledge of human nature. Ricardo habitually cautions the fiery reformer, not with the usual irritating phrase "when you are as old as I" or "if you had more experience," but with genuine wit that raises a laugh, sums up the situation, and all but persuades the audience that Ricardo is right and Savonarola wrong.

Over against him is the firebrand, the flame, the reckless, indiscreet, importunate, headstrong reformer, who thinks that truth can be told, while Ricardo, being older and wiser, knows that truth cannot be told. "Let us assume," says Ricardo, "that every priest . . . should preach the truth. But remember, we have accepted this convent from the hands of the Medici. We are bound to obedience to ecclesiastical superiors who are allies of the Medici." Under the impulse of the moment Savonarola answers with a burst of indignation: "Did I come to religion to fill my belly by fawning upon the rich?" Later, in what is usually called a "more chastened mood," he confesses, "I know you're right—all the world knows you're right—and the world is one of our three great enemies. I can't argue with you because all the wise, all the expedient, all the cautious are against me."

But when, after a prolonged burst of eloquence, Savonarola "stalks off," Fra Silvestro asks Ricardo, "Don't you honestly think he's right," the cautious old man answers, "He's so right that I shall never be able to show him how wrong he is. It will take the nine choirs of angels after his death to show him the difference between right and expediency."

And there, in the conflict of these two brothers in religion, the impetuous Savonarola and Ricardo, the advocate of expediency, is the essence of the play.

That theme has been played on the theater of the world a thousand times. It is always being played. It goes on now. As Father Nagle says, "the problem is with us all over again." Individuals in the audience at the stage play will lean to the protagonist Savonarola or the antagonist Ricardo in accordance with the attitude they take to the same play on the stage that we call life. I don't suppose it matters which side of the controversy the writer of this column takes. But if any one cares to know, I confess that I think more harm has come to religion and to the Church when ecclesiastics have temporized than when they have talked and acted violently. We have been too tolerant with the sins of kings and princes, and in consequence the people have visited the sins of potentates upon us.

St. John the Baptist beheaded is a better example than Richelieu clad in purple and fine linen and directing affairs of State from the palace of a king. Christ our Lord said, "I am come to cast fire on the earth and what will I but that it be kindled?" Time and again He acted with what the "prudent" would call recklessness. Quite probably His friends reminded Him that He must not fling invective in the face of the Pharisees. Just as did the brethren of Savonarola remind him that he must not fling a challenge in the face of the powerful Medici. "Knowest Thou not that I have power to kill Thee?" said Pilate to Jesus. "Knowest thou not that I have power to burn thee?" said Lorenzo in effect to Savonarola. "Your somewhat reverend prior had vision in which he learned that I was not long for this world," says the angry head of the Medici, and he goes on to threaten that he could come to the same conclusion about Savonarola without any vision. Lorenzo dies, but as Ricardo says, "There are always Medici," and the later Medici persuaded the people that their Prophet must be crucified.

In similar circumstances Jesus did not become more cautious. Rather He became bolder. What he said to the lords of the earth in His day was much the same that Savonarola was to say to the Medici and the Borgias.

Now, who was right and who was wrong? Omitting the obvious fact that Savonarola had not the mental and moral balance of the Son of God, the question remains, is there no place in the Church and in the world for the firebrand who makes mistakes but who is essentially honest?

See the play, or read it. It will help you to arrive at a conclusion. Perhaps, like St. Philip Neri, the gentlest of men, you will take to keeping a picture of Savonarola over your desk.

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Five Years Ago

—in the files of the CATHOLIC COURIER

From May 26, 1932, Edition

A glowing tribute to Miss Elizabeth Harmon, Catholic Daughters of America district deputy, and one of the diocesan Catholic women to receive the Papal decoration, "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice" was paid in a special article written by the Rev. Daniel A. O'Rourke.

From May 26, 1937, Edition

Catholic editors from all sections of the country were welcomed by Archbishop Mooney at the opening of the twenty-seventh annual convention of the Catholic Press Association of the United States with the CATHOLIC COURIER as host. Featured on opening day was the first National Catholic Press Exhibit in Hotel Sagamore.

St. Bridget's hall was being used for divine services following a fire which swept the interior of St. Bridget's Church on Gorham St.