

Library Signpost

'O Come, All Ye Faithful'

By Rev. Benedict Emons

Pope Pius XI wrote that there is nothing which instructs the faithful so well in the Christian faith as their celebration of the feasts of the Church. The Christmas carols that come from the great age of Faith are a striking confirmation of this judgment of the Pope. For they are folk-songs, and they show how deep was the understanding and love of the Christian mysteries in the souls of the common people of those days. Christian thought of the Middle Ages had learned by heart the deepest meaning of the Incarnation; and like a true lover it sang its heart out to the Divine Lover in hundreds of the loveliest songs ever sung.

All Europe celebrated the Nativity at Christmas-tide, not as the memory of a long past event but as something which was actually happening. Neighbor called to neighbor to join the pilgrimage to Bethlehem that they might adore the new-born Babe and worship Him. Every mother's heart yearned over Him in His helplessness. Every mother's heart ached in sympathy with Our Lady in her pain. Let us take food (said the good folk to one another) to the Holy Family in their hunger; let us take clothing for the little Babe in His nakedness. The phrase, 'Let us now go even to Bethlehem' was not to them the chronicled speech of some shepherds of olden time it was a direct personal appeal from neighbor to neighbor to hasten to the Crèche in company with the Shepherds who were making their journey in the hear and now. This was the old idea of Christmas a united Christendom celebrating this Christian Feast in which everyone was a partaker. (Sir Richard Terry, Two Hundred Folk Carols.)

This lovely aspect of medieval devotion is especially conspicuous in the French, Italian and Spanish carols. I will regale you with two striking examples.

This French carol expresses a gracious intimacy between the simplicity of earth and the simplicity of Heaven

Come and see the Holy One! Run ye, without ceasing! All the world with us doth run, On this journey pleasing! 'Evn the halt are coming!' How contented we shall be When the lovely Babe we see! 'Evn the lame are running!'

One to Ham doth bear a lamb, One a cheese doth carry! One a little calf doth lead, One and all do tarry Through this day amazing! Not content the Babe to see, They must bow on bended knee, Worshipping and praising!

I myself, as well as they, Loving Gifts without proffer! Come with me O come away, All our hearts to offer! Though the crowd is growing, Joyfully we'll go along, Singing loud our Noel song, Loving hearts overflowing!

This rugged carol from the Besancon district of France reveals the poetry of the commonplace when the light of heaven shines upon it.

Up and shake thee Peterkin, We must go and see this Child! Hark at Tom and Tony's din, Singing fit to wake the wild! We'll knock up as we go by, Matty and his Isobel, Shouting as from God on high Noel! Noel!

See the crowd that goes along Every one with gift and song You're too late to pick your best! Bundle up these stumps of vine, Just the thing to warm the nest, I've a barrel of my wine Shouting as from God on high Noel! Noel!

What a slacker thou to don 'Drat' my gaiters both be wet! Shall be never clad? Come on! 'Now the buttonholes won't fit! Reach me down my Sunday shoes Overhead in yon caboose, Shouting as from God on high Noel! Noel!

Now then gossip I am sped Don't stop staring at that pig! If the stars baint overhead Put your lantern into rig 'Tis a steep and rocky way Bad for blindman's holiday, Shouting as from God on high Noel! Noel!

Master Joseph, right good day You be very welcome here. But what ever made you stray Where there be no little cheer? Peter kindly up them pegs, Margot, did you bring them eggs? Shouting as from God on high Noel! Noel!

All the best we have to give Was His own before tonight, Now He takes our every grief In exchange for joy an' light Take your pipes and wind 'em right, I'll my oboe Jack recite! Shouting as from God on high Noel! Noel!

(I am indebted for these carols to Sir Richard Terry's Two Hundred Folk Carols, published by Burns, Oates & Washbourne London, 1932. The translation of the first is by Mr. K. W. Simpson, that of the second by Monsignor John O'Connor, the original of Chesterton's Father Time.)

PRAY FOR HIS CANONIZATION



Catholics of the Archdiocese of the Diocese of California, upon the request of their Ordinaries, have inaugurated a crusade of prayer for the early canonization of Father Junipero Serra, noted missionary apostle of that State. Above is the statue of the pioneer missionary which appears in the Statuary Hall of the United States Capitol, as a representative of the State of California in that hall of fame (N.C.W.C.)

EDITORIALS

(Continued from Page 22)

Effectively his duty that was to lead "all mankind to see the Salvation of God."

Wise men today will follow John, will not be led aside by the great ones of civic and worldly life from the great business of the Salvation of God. Memories of other men must fall; the memory of John the Baptist and of the Word of God which came to him, shall remain. Let us pray to St. John the Baptist to help us make ready in our hearts the Way of the Lord!

'Quiz' Corner

Do people have to spend years in Purgatory, according to their sins in this life?

We know nothing about the time of detention in Purgatory, but we can infer from the awfulness of sin that many souls suffer for long periods. The Church approves foundations of Masses for the deceased extending over long periods of time.

If there is a Providence, why do poverty, illness and other physical evils exist in the world?

Physical evils exist partly as a result of the imperfections of creatures, partly also as a punishment for sin, and to sanctify the good and detach their hearts from the things of the earth. Tribulations also serve to bring back the sinner to repentance.

Suffering may be a blessing in disguise, for it is the fruitful source of merit, the greatest sufferers being the greatest saints.

But to gain merit under suffering we must be patient and resigned. The Apostles went from the council, after being scourged, rejoicing to have been found worthy to suffer for Jesus (Acts V. 41).

Please explain what is meant by the Ember Days. The Ember Days are three days

four seasons of the year. They are set aside by the Church as days of fast and abstinence to thank God for the blessings of the seasons gone before and implore His blessing on the new season, and at the same time to atone for our sins. Ordinations to the priesthood usually take place on these days and the faithful are asked to pray for good priests. The Ember Days were introduced into the Church about the sixth century but they probably had a more ancient origin in the agricultural feasts of the Romans.

Is it true that a layman may be elected Pope?

Theoretically speaking it is true that any male Christian who has attained the use of reason may be elected Pope. It has been the custom for centuries to elect a member of the Sacred College of Cardinals. Since no layman will be given the dignity of the Cardinals a layman cannot be elected Pope. While Gregory VII was not a priest at the time of his election he was immediately ordained priest and consecrated bishop, since the office of Pope is attached to the See of Rome. The Bishop of Rome is the head of the Universal

Brushing Up On History

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

Raymond Gram Swing who seems to be something of a historical scholar even though a mere layman, has taken occasion to remark in a recent issue of the Catholic Courier that there has been fighting in Tunis almost 2,000 years ago. At least it is likely if he had referred to the war between Rome and Carthage, that I think he had, he should have said not 2,000 but 2,100 years ago. With judicious intervals of peace, or a long hiatus of peace, wars have been fought in that corner of the world since the First Punic War, 264 B.C.

The Punic wars, that is to say the Rome-Carthage wars, three of them, went on for a hundred years with scarcely a break. They were the big wars in fact the outcome decided who was to have dominion over the Mediterranean world. Call it what you will, the whole civilized world in the west, the only part of the globe that had any culture apart from India and China. The Romans had conquered, say by 100 B.C. and they had gone when they lacked Carthage.

Julius Caesar didn't come along until a hundred years after Carthage had been nearly hid down, and not until this time did Rome get control of what we now call France. But Hannibal, a great general himself and father of a still greater military genius, Hannibal, had taken Spain just before the Second Punic war. Rome was practically conquered at that. Even in those days the Romans thought of the Mediterranean as their sea. "Our sea," it had already in mind the subtleties of all the countries that touched upon "their" sea.

From the middle of the third century B.C. to the middle of the second, Rome fought it out with Carthage and won. The City of Carthage, since by the present capital, Tunis, was shattered, laid flat to the ground, literally plowed under and sown with sea salt as a symbol that it must not grow again. At just that time Rome also achieved her final victory over Greece.

As for Egypt, it became Greek under Alexander in the fourth century B.C., and remained under the Ptolemies until the days of Cleopatra, Anthony and Octavian Augustus.

From that time on and until the coming of the Vandals, that is to say for 400 years, North Africa was Roman. Like Rome it became Christian and with the new religion came a new intellectual birth. In fact several of the greatest intellectual lights in Christian history were born in North Africa in Roman Christian times. Tertullian, Cyprian, and head and shoulders above all others an earlier one of the Mediterranean -- St. Augustine, who would probably be chosen in any list of the five or six supremely creative intellectuals in the history of thought. He was born in Tagaste and was Bishop of Hippo. As he lay dying in 430 A.D. the Vandals were laying siege to his city.

All these reminiscences of what we learned at high school and in college swarmed into my mind that night when Raymond Gram Swing mentioned the word "Carthage." Today our soldiers are marching on the soil of Carthage and Hippo and Tagaste and flying over it. They will see small signs of the majestic civilization and the spiritual culture that once were there. That civilization and that culture were destroyed not only by the Vandals--later the Saracens and Moors--but by the ever-recurring wars that have afflicted North Africa for at least 2,100 years.

It makes any thoughtful person wonder if this sort of thing must go on forever. And the shame of it is that the source of war seems not to have been touched--not to any removed--by Christianity. The Romans before Christ were ruthless conquerors and in the wars with the Carthaginians they mistreated the African enemy in savagery and bad faith. They spoke of Punic Ponics "Carthaginian faith" and as we speak of the Nazi disregard for treaties or of Japanese treachery. But unprejudiced historians insist that the Romans had nothing to learn from the Carthaginians either in treachery or cruelty.

One might have imagined that the great struggle over Europe and Africa would have been changed when heathenism faded. But wars continued, and treachery and cruelty. It makes one think of the prophets' exclamation "How long O Lord, how long?" Here we hope that the latest war in North Africa, in Europe and Asia will be the last. (Copyright, 1942, N. C. W. C.)

FIVE and TEN Years Ago

From Dec. 14, 1937, Edition Prayers for the souls of the departed of the Sanctuary, Bishop O'Hern, stricken with serious illness, were asked throughout the diocese in an official bulletin issued by the Rt. Rev. Msgr. William M. Hall, Vicar General of Rochester.

From Dec. 16, 1937, Edition Creation by His Holiness, Pope Pius XI of the Archdiocese of Newark and Louisville and of the Diocese of Paterson, N. J.; Camden, N. J. and Greensboro, Ky. was announced at the Apostolic Delegation in Washington.

"Events such as this gathering are encouraging because they prove you are working to keep Christ in the world." His Excellency, Bishop Kenney, told 275 pilgrims at the second annual Catholic Charities dinner in Mark Twain Hotel.

Quote--End Quote

"We have no faith in that secret weapon story. The weapon might be possible, but not the secret--We're certain." "Gazette"

You cannot prevent the birds of sadness from flying over your head, but you may prevent them from stopping to build their nest in your heart.