

Sermon Cards

Vandals Of The Present Era

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

In World War Number One, it was customary to call the Germans Huns. In the present war it would seem appropriate to call them also Vandals. The word "Hun" carries a connotation of cruelty. The word "Vandal" has been appropriated to those who wantonly destroy valuable and beautiful things. Generally Vandals are barbarians to whom a thing of beauty makes no appeal. Whether the original Vandals were more destructive than other Germanic tribes, Goths, Franks, Bulgars, seems not to be the question. The Romans thought they were, and people of Roman descent by race or by culture, have continued to use the word "Vandal" to designate barbaric conquerors and after them all barbarians whom "bump of destruction" or the old ethnologists used to say, is abnormally large.

Now if the documentary film "Moscow Stripes Back" is authentic, not in any degree posed, the Nazis will go down in history as among the worst of Vandals. There are terrible scenes in that film. In fact it is in spots quite harrowing. The Soviet photographers seem to have been right up in the front lines. They went into battle with the soldiers; broke through the Nazi lines, made intimate "shots" of bayonet fighting from street to street, from house to house; they were on hand for the "mopping up" process—rather ghastly business—they kept their cameras grinding when girls who had been abused by the retreating German officers were dragged out into the light and fell into the arms of their mothers; they have spared the spectator nothing; men still hanging, a dozen on one scaffold, corpses in the snow, small children stripped naked and butchered, victims of the aesthetic degeneracy of the Nazi military caste.

All is shown on the screen, nothing was considered too horrifying to set before the eyes of moviegoers in America. That fact in itself is a commentary upon us. No one leaves the theater, no one faints or shrieks. Those documentary films have toughened us terribly. For better or for worse we

are different from what we were ten years ago. We can stand anything. Perhaps we have become sturdier.

But the principal point of this little piece is not the cruelty but the vandalism of the Nazi officers. "Moscow Stripes Back" shows the homes of Chabner, Tolstokovsky and Tolstoy before the generals, the colonels and captains moved in—and afterwards. The houses burned, whitely or partially, paintings ripped from the walls, libraries of books and of manuscript music thrown hither and thither about, stately unshaken furniture broken up for kindling wood (even in a region where forests abound) and in general purposeful malicious destruction of works of art and literature. The commentator (a celebrated movie actor who does his job with great restraint) repeatedly says with quiet sarcasm "the superior race," "the proponents of culture," "the most civilized people" of the Germans. It is very effective. Part of it may have been staged, for example, the curator of Tolstokovsky's house appearing, picking up a broken bust of the composer and apparently soliloquizing over it—like Hamlet over the skull of Yorick; and the odd reminiscence—very odd indeed—of his looking down to discover torn sheets from Wagner's "Lohengrin" scattered about on the lawn—the title "Lohengrin" being clearly visible to the spectator. But the whole thing can scarcely have been posed or fabricated. The evidence seems to be that the "Huns" of 1913 who burned the Lovelace library, though priding themselves on their love of learning, are the same vandals of 1941 who refused to spare even such treasures as were in the houses of a famous Russian dramatist, a composer of great music and a novelist of world renown.

There is talk—even by our own President—of trying and punishing as criminals those who brought on this hideous war and who have prosecuted it so cruelly. Perhaps they will be charged also with vandalism. But the original manuscripts of great art and music and drama and literature are irreparably destroyed. How great a misfortune this is to our world may be understood by those of us who have seen similar products of genius in—for example—the J. Pierpont Morgan collection. Catholics in particular, whose Popes and monks have carried on the tradition of treasuring the product of culture century after century, will lament this latest evidence of the destructive power of war—such war as happens nowadays.

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Challenge Of Moral War Faced By Catholic Press

By A. J. Way

General Manager, Catholic Press Union, Cleveland, President, Catholic Press Association

War is the job of the Catholic Press of America in this year of 1943.

Above and beyond the duty and the privilege of contributing our utmost to the victory of our arms, the Catholic Press bears the challenge of fierce moral warfare which rages in and around and through the physical combat in which the world is locked.

It is warfare against those evils which Prue XI forewarned, with the clarity of a vision and cried out in anguish.

Good Manners

We all can't have good looks, but we can all have good manners. And one of the best places to display our good breeding is in church. We must compliment our fine people for the superb church manners they have. They move in the seat; they come to Mass on time; they don't leave until the Priest has left the Sanctuary; they have a Missal or prayer book. (From the Bulletin of the Sacred Heart Church, Pittsburgh)

Faith Confirmed

Your faith is confirmed, not only in the heart, but before the eyes of men. Heaven bears witness to it, and the earth, likewise, the angels in glory and the fiends in hell.—St. Augustine.

Many of the high places in the world are dedicated to St. Michael, the Archangel.

Library Signpost

Wheat Of Christ

By Rev. Benedict Ebanca

ST. IGNATIUS, Bishop of Antioch and martyr born in Syria about the year 30 and probably knew St. John the Evangelist. During the persecution of Trajan he was sent to Rome to fight the heresy and his journey was a sort of triumphal progress; during its passage he wrote seven letters to different churches, in which may be recognized the whole system of Christian doctrine as we know it today. He was slain by Rome in the Flavian amphitheatre and what was left of his body was taken back to Antioch. . . . The words of the Communion verse of his Mass were spoken by himself in the arena: "I am the wheat of Christ; may I be ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread."

Reading that paragraph on St. Ignatius of Antioch from Donald Attwater's Catholic Encyclopedic Dictionary (Macmillan), I thought to myself how little our good people know about the great heroes and giants of our faith. Here we are, members of a great household, children of a great family, and what little interest we show in these great forebears of ours! I don't see how we can appreciate our magnificent Church if we are going to keep ourselves cooped up in the little penthouse of our own selves and of the passing present. There was a time, not beyond living memory, when Catholic people opened the windows of their life wide on the great vistas of the lives of the Saints, and braced their souls with the pure and vigorous air of our holy past.

The holy is not the stuffy. There is nothing stuffy or boring in the letters of the holy Bishop Ignatius. Picture this venerable elder brought along the rutty roads, the Lord knows how, perhaps in a bumping oxcart, from Asia Minor to Rome, where he knew he was to be made a public show, being eaten by the lions. All along the way, the little Christian communities turned out to meet him and grieve for him, like the Holy Women in the Eighth Station of the Way of the Cross. At Ephesus, at Magnesia, at Tralles, at Philadelphia, at Smyrna, there they were in Christian charity to console and encourage him. As Donald Attwater says, it was more "a triumphal progress" than a mission to die. And to each of these communities, after he had met them, he sent back a thanks-letter, full of hope and inspired direction for the full living of the Christian "good news."

Beside me as I write, there is a little book which contains these letters of Ignatius, with their original Greek on one page and an English translation on the opposite page. Looking at its open pages, one can jump lightly over nineteen centuries and come close in spirit to the saintly captain of Christ, lacking all comfort in the joggling cart, but still dwelling with the thoughts of patience and gratitude which he would write and post at the next station.

His thoughts were not lagging thoughts; they leaped ahead to that final goal in the West, Rome, where in the arena he would enter upon his bridal day in heaven. "God has vouchsafed that the bishop of Syria shall be found at the setting of the sun, having fetched him from the sun's rising. It is good to set to the world towards God, that I may rise to Him."

But he was anxious about what the Christians at Rome might be doing in his behalf. They might be using influence to set him free. Trajan, the Emperor, was not a fierce man, though very set against the new religion of the Christians. With the right approach, and through the right channels, it might be possible to commute the condemnation of Ignatius. . . . After all, he was an ageing man, of great repute throughout the East. Ignatius must forestall this possibility. One thing

mattered: the kiss of death and the nuptials of Eternity which beckoned to him from the arena. It would be no favor for the Roman Christians to take that from him. He must get word to them.

Spartacus had no more heroic message to his gladiators than Ignatius in his Letter to the Romans, as he came slowly westward to die. It is a legacy of love for Christ, of which all the Christian centuries should be proud, reading it again and again to keep the martyr spirit alive:

"Suffer me to be eaten by the beasts, through whom I can attain to God. I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread of Christ. Rather suffer the wild beasts that they may become my tomb, and leave no trace of my body, than when I fall asleep I be not in debt to any. Then shall I be truly a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world shall not even see my body. Henceforth Christ act on my behalf, that I may be found a sacrifice through these instruments (i. e., the wild beasts). I do not order you as did Peter and Paul; they were Apostles, I am a convict; they were free, I am even now a slave. But if I suffer I shall be Jesus Christ's freedman, and in Him I shall rise free. Now I am learning in my bonds to give up all desires.

"Grant me this favor, I know what is expedient for me; now I am beginning to be a disciple. May nothing of things seen or unseen envy me my attaining to Jesus Christ. Let there come on me fire, and cross, and struggle with wild beasts, cutting, and tearing, scumder, rackings of bones, mangling of flesh, crushing of my whole body, cruel tortures of the devil, may I but attain to Jesus Christ."

Now have the patience, dear reader, to turn to the Mass of February 1st in your Missal, and look over the Epistle which the Church assigns for the Feast of St. Ignatius. It will inspire you to see how faithfully the words of St. Paul are echoed in the words and life of this heroic Martyr-Bishop of Antioch.

(Acknowledgments to the Macmillan Co. for the Attwater quotation, and to G. P. Putnam's Sons for the St. Ignatius quotations taken from Vol. I of Kirsopp Lake's The Apostolic Fathers.)

FIVE and TEN Years Ago--

From Feb. 2, 1932, Edition. An audience of more than 200 women in Dunn Memorial Building of St. Joseph's Hospital, Elmira, heard the purposes of the National Council of Catholic Women clearly defined by Miss Carolyn Ruth Doran, Elmira, a member of the National Committee on Representation and of the Rochester Council N. C. W. Board of Directors.

From Feb. 2, 1932, Edition. From contributions made to the world by Catholic women through twenty centuries, His Excellency Bishop Kearney drew inspiration for members of the Catholic Women's Club in present-day activities at a dinner in his honor at the Rochester Club.

The Rev. Leo F. McGreal, S.J., an American priest stationed at Gonzaga College, China, and a native of Ontario, N. Y., was named on the American Advisory Committee in China to cooperate with the American Red Cross in a campaign in this country for relief of civilian population in China.

Feast Days

- Tuesday, Feb. 7.—ST. ROMUALD.
Monday, Feb. 8.—ST. JOHN OF MATHA.
Tuesday, Feb. 9.—ST. APOLLONIA.
Wednesday, Feb. 10.—ST. SCHOLASTICA.
Thursday, Feb. 11.—OUR LADY OF LOURDES.
Friday, Feb. 12.—SEVEN SERVITES.
Saturday, Feb. 13.—ST. CATHERINE OF RUCCA.

EDITORIALS

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lice has given it the more popular name of "Candlemas." When Mary and Joseph presented Jesus in the temple, they made the customary offering for the use of the temple. Of old the custom obtained in the Church of imitating Mary on this day by making an offering for use in the church. Candles for use at Mass and other services were the gift proper to the day of the candle-Mass or Candlemas.

Blessed candles belong in church and also in the home. Thoughtful Catholics do not wait till serious sickness assails one of the family, to obtain two blessed candles. Thoughtless Catholics do wait, and then are put to great pains to borrow candles from a neighbor, to press into use some fine candles of paraffin in grayish white, or some dinner candles in all the colors of the rainbow, or to hasten to the church to get candles they should have obtained on Candlemas Day or on the Sunday after that day. Have your blessed candles ready, carry one lighted to the door to greet the priest when he brings Holy Communion to one sick. Light one before your shrine of the Sacred Heart, of Mary, as you pray. Yes, when danger threatens, be ready to light your blessed candle; it is good Catholic practice to light one during severe thunder-storms. Have one burning during the closing hours of life of your dear ones. Have one or more burning about the casket that holds the body soon to be buried. Keep your blessed candles in a proper place, well protected against warping or discoloration, and return them to the church if they become too old and decrepit; get new ones, keep them fresh and becoming in appearance.

UNTIL THE HARVEST

The Kingdom of Heaven is the Church of God on earth; the Church is the power and the glory and the grace of Jesus Christ, the outward expression of His will to save all men. This Kingdom has been God's instrument for planting the seed of all good in the world, in the souls of men. Were God's will to prevail, that seed would bring forth fruit one hundred fold. But man's free will comes in to sow weeds among the wheat. Opportunity to exercise free will gives man his liberty of choice, choice of good or of evil. Were God to take away all opportunity for man's exercise of free will, vice would, indeed, be destroyed,—and also virtue! Virtue shines more brightly in man's record, because he could have turned to vice. "He could have transgressed, and did not transgress."

Holy men, learned men have asked how evil can be in a world made by the God of goodness. The parable of the Gospel for this Sunday represents the servants of the householder coming to him with an inquiry concerning the weeds that were beginning to appear among the wheat. Did this seed come from the householder? Had it, planted wheat and weeds in the one sowing? Christ gives the answer in the words of the householder: "An enemy hath done this." An enemy has sown the weeds among the wheat; an enemy has brought evil into the world, into the hearts of men.

Why not expel at once all evil from the world? Why permit the weeds to live even for a time, why not pluck them out so that only the wheat may remain? Immediate removal of all possibility of evil, might easily injure the practice of virtue. Merit for worthy souls increases through constant struggle against vice. Indeed, wicked men, men who have allowed the weeds of vice to thrive for a time in their souls, are often won by the valiant example of good men and God's grace to repentance. God knows best. He can bring good out of evil. He will allow both evil and good to be in the world till the Day of Judgment, when the final decision shall be given: when the householder will bind the weeds into bundles to burn, while the wheat he gathers into his barns. Christ has planted the seed of all good in our hearts; let us give it full opportunity for healthy growth, by not allowing a sinful world to plant the weed of evil beside it. In our days of growth, of development, let us prepare properly for the great harvest, bringing forth our fruit in abundance.