

# Scientists Identify Prince Of Apostles' Tomb In St. Peter's Basilica Crypt

## Pontiff Buried In Outside Grave In Rome

Vatican City (NC)—After his martyrdom, in the year 67 of the Christian era, St. Peter was buried in a common outside grave along the road leading up Vatican Hill.

The grave was not laid to rest in a sarcophagus or a mausoleum. The grave was located in exactly the same spot that has been indicated by Christian tradition through 19 centuries.

This spot has been held sacred and has been venerated without interruption, virtually since the time of St. Peter's martyr death. And this spot is today beneath the Papal altar of St. Peter's Basilica.

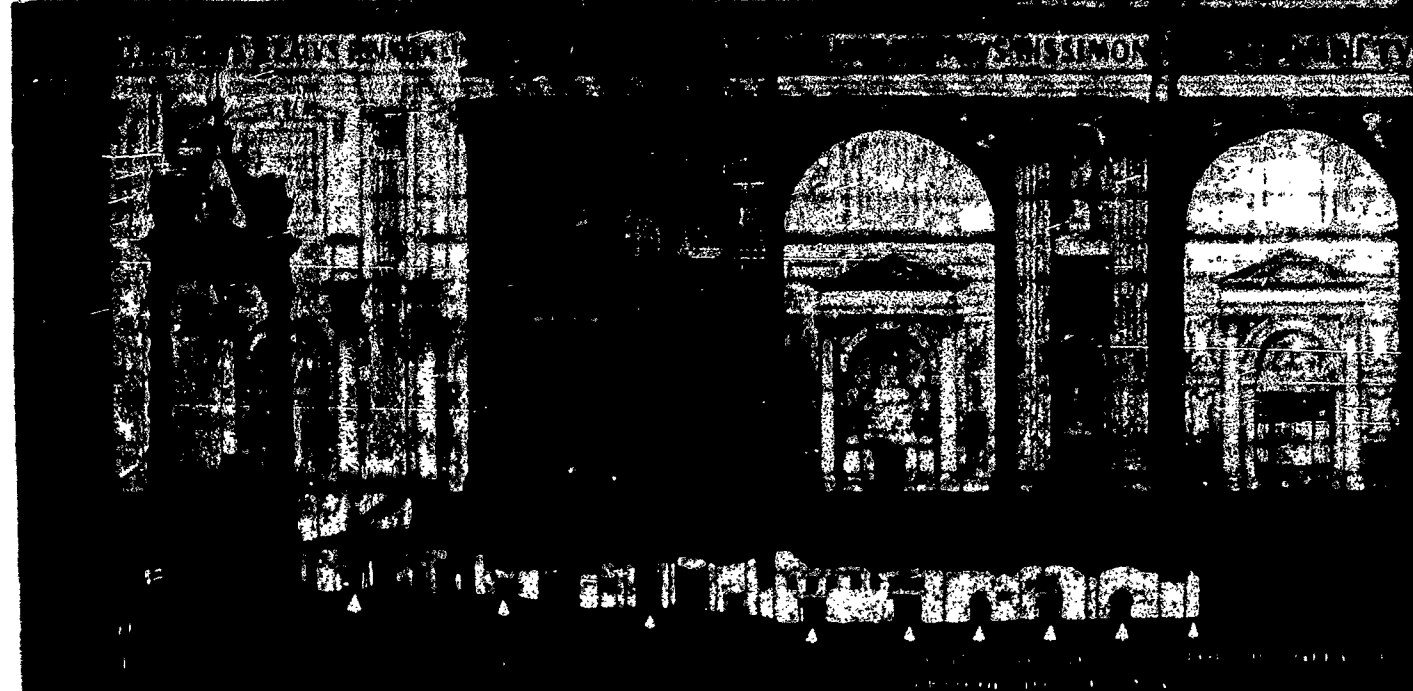
This information has been fully substantiated in two volumes just presented to His Holiness Pope Pius XII. They contain the illustrated record of the archaeological findings during the excavations of the past ten years beneath the crypt of St. Peter's.

The volumes were presented to the Pontiff by Magr. Ludwig Kaas, secretary of the Sacred Congregation of the Basilica of St. Peter, and four archaeologists who carried out the work under his direction. The scientists were the Revs. Antonio Ferrua, S.J., and Engelbert Kirshbaum, S.J., Prof. Enrico Jost and Architect Bruno Apolloni-Quattori.

The "CONFESSION" of St. Peter — and in particular the bronze-grilled niche set into the base of the Papal altar—remains vindicated as a veritable marker over the spot of St. Peter's burial.

Beneath this niche is the grave of St. Peter. It was there, too, according to the official report, that "scattered and mixed with earth, some human bones were found which have been carefully collected." (It is recalled that a year ago the Pope, referring to this discovery of human bones at the side of the tomb, declared: "It is impossible to prove with certainty that they belong to the body of the Apostle.")

The Confession — known to every visitor to St. Peter's Bas-



This large cutaway drawing shows the upper and lower grottoes under St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, and gives an idea of the delicate task of excavating which the workers encountered during the past ten years in their search for the bones of St. Peter, directly under the altar.

Traditional location of the bones of the Prince of the Apostles, buried there about A.D. 66. Immediately under the floor of the nave are the upper grottoes where the bones were buried, dating back to 16th century. Lower grottoes comprised the Roman pagan cemetery on Vatican Hill, the tombs of the ancient families. (from a Diagram by Mr. A. Leydenfrost) (NC Photos).

of the rather steep slope of a hill, facing southwards." THE PLACE where St. Peter was buried is a spot on what was then called "ager vaticanus" ("Vatican field" because it adjoined Vatican Hill). It was not in a pagan necropolis as hitherto held. All present indications establish the fact that St. Peter's burial place was not a regular cemetery at all, although nearby there were mausoleums and other graves, which was a common practice in those days outside the city limits.

Subsequently, the place developed into a necropolis, it was explained. As a matter of fact, the discovery of some masonry work, undertaken in connection with the development of this cemetery and the building of mausoleums, contributed largely toward identifying and isolating the proper grave of St. Peter.

The nub of the whole question is the confusing regard for this particular spot, ever since the time of St. Peter's burial. New graves and mausoleums were added as the cemetery developed; yet there was one carefully segregated rectangle which was never encroached upon.

### British Catholics Gain 25,000

London — (RNS) — Roman Catholics in England and Wales increased by 25,000 to 2,837,700 during the past year, according to estimates in the Catholic Directory for 1952.

Largest Catholic increase was shown in the Westminster archdiocese, with 234,000 Catholics. Conversions to Catholicism numbered just over 11,000.

### Leftist Paper Raps Canada Nuns Fate

London—(NC)—The treatment of the Canadian nuns at Canton by the Chinese communists roused a general wave of indignation in Britain.

The Daily Mirror, mass-circulation picture paper with left wing views, printed a surprisingly frank leader on the subject on its back page under the heading, "So this is Communism."

"Not everyone, by any means, would have been prepared to label the communist regime in China as totally evil," it declared.

"But a sympathetic view is no longer possible. In every nation not sunken under communist barbarism there will be disgust at the shameful and cynical plotting of Christian women whose only crime is to have devoted themselves to relieving the misery of the Chinese people—the sort of duty that Chinese leaders traditionally do not bother about."

"CHILDREN MAY die in the street without awakening Chinese consciences. But when they are picked up by pitying foreigners and die instead in an orphanage the communist conscience is aroused to organize mobs and cry 'murder.' The Canadian nuns, sentenced by a howling rabble described as a People's Court in Canton, are victims of a campaign to spread hate against 'imperialists.' This technique of the mass trial as political propaganda is not a Chinese invention. It follows the pattern made familiar by the communists in Russia and Eastern Europe.

"If the leaders of China object to foreigners trying to help the Chinese people they could politely expel the foreigners from their communist paradise. But that would be to miss the chance of making scapegoats for the deliberate manufacture of hatred. Communism has asked the world to believe that it is the hope of progressive humanity. It has proved on the contrary that neither humanity, nor decency, nor the simple safety of any individual is respected where it holds power. Its deeds are evil historical and archeological and its mind reactionary. It is the death of any kind of civilization."

AS A MATTER of fact, the place is so narrow that it has been found impossible to obtain a photograph that could give an overall idea of the grave's position. Only various particulars of component parts have been photographed.

It is regarded as certain here that this hallowed spot will never be open to the general public, because of the extremely difficult access, the tight space and the danger of irreparable damage to the precious relics.

The same goes, for the present at least, for the other excavations in the immediate vicinity. There, too, only very small groups of persons can be admitted. Public visits simply cannot be arranged safely and conveniently.

THE EXCAVATIONS have shown that — although veneration of the tomb continued without interruption — all the alterations of the Constantinian basilica, and the ultimate demolition and the construction of the present basilica took place without any examination into the historical and archeological content of the original Constantinian shrine.

### Holy See Issues Scientific Report On Peter's Tomb

Vatican City—(NC)—The reports on the excavations beneath St. Peter's Basilica which have been presented to His Holiness Pope Pius XII consist of two volumes bearing the title: "Explorations Under the Confession of St. Peter in the Vatican, Executed During the Years 1948-1949."

Identified as a publication of the Holy See itself—not one of the Vatican Publishing House—the two volumes were prepared in cooperation with the Italian government printing office, since the Vatican printing plant is not equipped for the difficult reproduction of the photographs and other illustrations.

The first volume of the set contains 273 pages with an index and a nomenclature appendix, listing the great number of coins found during the excavations. The fact that the majority of these coins was found around and above the tomb of the Apostle is taken as added evidence for the long and uninterrupted veneration which has continued at this place from the days before Emperor Constantine down to modern times.

The second volume contains 169 tables of illustrations and photographs besides 17 pages of text.

Through 19 centuries, through most varied and radical structural changes, the veneration of the Apostle's tomb was perpetuated at this spot," writes Osservatore. "From the time when the body of St. Peter was buried by his faithful disciples in a humble tomb in the bare earth on Vatican Hill, until our own day.

"Such persistence, established as it is by the findings of the excavations, may, indeed, be regarded as a new proof for the indefeasible nature of the Redeemer's promise to St. Peter: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'"

The archaeological labors brought to light not only evidence of later Christian burials all around the site of the St. Peter's tomb, but also evidence of masonry and ornamental work undertaken by the early Christians to set apart and adorn the Apostle's tomb. At one time the place was faced with a small stone wall and provided with an ornamental niche to indicate the exact spot. Traces of carved columns were found to allow an imaginary reconstruction of the site.

### RING IN THE NEW!

Near East friends made this child and many others, old and young, happy at Christmas time. So they wish you, from full hearts, a bright New Year of 1952. This picture tells a plain story, the short and simple annals of the poor. Our orphans, our old folk, our blind, our lepers, our missionaries were made happy in 1951 by you. Now they struggle on through another year. They know what those dollar-a-month Clubs mean — BASILIANS for their schools, MONICA GUILD for their humble chapels, MARY'S BANK for their Sisters, CHRYSTOSTOMS for their native priests, the DAMIEN LE P E FUND and ORPHAN'S BREAD for them. They want 1952 to be bright for you. They know you will make it bright for them by joining one of these Clubs.



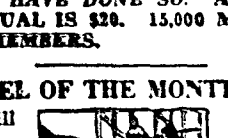
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HOLY HEARTS Sister Joan of Arc is in her first year of novitiate with the Sisters of the Holy Hearts at Bikfaya, Lebanon, and she will need \$150 for each of the two years of her preparation. Can you make her your adopted daughter in Christ?



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