



George Washington was a man of humble faith, publicly knelt in prayer as in the bitter winter siege at Valley Forge. His birthday is tomorrow, February 22nd.

Faith, Freedom Grow Together

The Catholic Church in the United States is characteristically very American and thoroughly Catholic.

Our nation's distinguished first president, George Washington, it is interesting to note, played a definite role in shaping the destiny of the Catholic Church in America.

THERE IS a story, never definitely proved one way or another, that he actually became a Catholic in the last hours before he died. It is a fact that he cherished a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary and had it in his room during his last illness.

It is also a fact worth noting that America's first Catholic bishop came into office at just about the same time as America's first president was inaugurated.

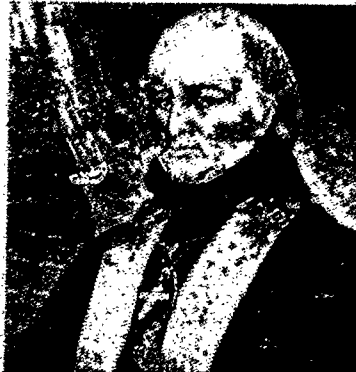
The American Catholic Church and the American government began their separate lives under the leadership of two men who were very much alike and left the impact of their decisions on their respective organizations ever since.

JOHN CARROLL, Jesuit trained in France, a cousin of Maryland's wealthy and high ranking Charles Carroll who signed the Declaration of Independence, rose by his own ability and sheer force of character to knit the scattered Catholic colonists into a progressive ecclesiastical organization.

Up to the time of the American Revolution, Catholics in this country had feared the idea of having a bishop. They thought that a "popish bishop" would antagonize their Protestant neighbors and stir up new tensions and turmoil.

Maryland Catholics once even opposed the visit of Quebec's Bishop Briand to confer confirmation—they preferred to forego the sacrament rather than risk losing the slight toleration they then enjoyed.

AFTER WASHINGTON'S victory over the British at Yorktown, the Yankee band struck up the tune "The World Turned Upside Down." The tune was prophetic of a new era that was born that day not only for the American government but for the Catholic Church in this country.



BISHOP CARROLL

Vatican officials were quick to recognize the spirit of freedom which characterized the new-born republic.

In an unprecedented move, Rome allowed the American priests to elect a bishop themselves. They unanimously chose Carroll. He was consecrated in England on November 6, 1789, seven months after Washington took his oath as America's first president.

His diocese had its cathedral at Baltimore but his territory included the entire original thirteen United States.

WASHINGTON AND CARROLL knew each other, met at least a few times, and had considerable respect for each other. Neither was a brilliant man. They both rose to their rank by their character—true, slow, persistent, dedicated service.

Each in his own way was the captain demanded by the times in which they lived.

Their decisions and their plans had a timeless quality which gave both Church and Country a stability and capacity to progress despite the expansions and the setbacks of 150 years.

JOSEPH BREIG

Gulf Between Two Worlds

In previous articles about the current debate over alleged "American Catholic mediocrity," I have shown:



First, that there are curious omissions in many of the names of Catholic intellectuals from the pages of Who's Who in America.

Second, that by and large the basic qualification for being listed in Who's Who is merely to be well known.

In this connection, I would like to quote a passage from Hilaire Belloc's "A Shorter History of England" (Page 34 in the edition I used).

I do not wish to push too far the comparison between what Belloc was talking about, and what we are talking about. Nevertheless, Belloc's statement seems to me illuminating. Here it is:

"In all this bad state of affairs," he was writing about the decline of the Roman Empire "only one institution increased in vigor, gave more hope and character, and afforded a refuge.

"This was the Catholic Church, which increased in organization and numbers everywhere, though still in most places, but a minority—in many a small minority—and treated with hostility by the official classes, the government, and the bulk of Pagan society.

"There arose also a mass of Catholic literature which expanded as the years passed. But there was this interesting thing to note: the Church and its writers were boycotted. To read the Pagans of the day, especially the official ones, you would hardly know that the Church existed, or had anything to say for itself."

Belloc in another place, in his maturest literary years, said something of the same sort, not about the Roman Empire but about the modern world.

He spoke of the gulf between the Church and the world. He illustrated it by observing that to 400 (now 500) million Catholics, St. Therese, the Little Flower, is like a member of their own families. But to a billion and a half others, she is a stranger.

Catholics know the world around them. But that world does not know the Catholic world. It does not know Catholic thought or Catholic literature. It does not care about knowing them.

CATHOLIC publishers, I am confident, would testify, if questioned, that the books they turn out do not receive their share of attention in newspapers, magazines and other channels of publicity. Indeed, they are generally ignored.

I will not call this a boycott in the usual sense of the term. The fact is that secular editors, reviewers and publicists are little interested in things Catholic. They hardly understand our literature at all. Therefore they do not acquaint the general public with it.

The result is that an author of "secular" books which sell, at most, 10,000 copies each, becomes "well known" and is listed in Who's Who.

Conversely, a "Catholic author" who chalks up sales of 25,000 or more, is often unknown outside the Catholic world, and cannot be found in Who's Who.

THIS FACT of modern life was underlined by a publisher who remarked to me that if England should ever become largely Catholic, everybody would be reading Chesterton; but if not, then not.

As I said, "I do not wish to push comparison with pagan Rome too far. But there has been a remarkable Catholic literary revival in the past quarter-century, and it has gone largely unnoticed outside the Catholic world."

"There arose a mass of Catholic literature. . . . But there was this interesting thing to note: the Church and its writers were boycotted. . . . To use the secular world's judgments as a basis for comparing the achievements of Catholics and others seems highly unrealistic. And this is one of the neglected considerations which I desire to inject into the discussion.

Crossroads Of Prayer

By PAUL W. McCLOSKEY (N.C.W.C. News Service)

Lourdes—Spurred by the repeated encouragement given by Pope Pius XII, Catholics the world over are making this 100th anniversary year of the Lourdes apparitions another Marian Year.

But nowhere is this more true than at this world-crossroads of prayer.

ASH WEDNESDAY had a double meaning here at Lourdes.

The jubilee year had opened triumphantly only eight days earlier with perhaps 70,000 people here to pray at the grotto of Massabielle and to assist at the hundreds of Masses offered close by or at the grotto itself.

But the start of the Lenten season this year also marked the start of the centennial of the fortnight during which Our Lady asked St. Bernadette to come to the grotto daily. It was in the course of that two week period, Bernadette later said, that Mary cried out: "Penance, penance, penance!"

A special Mass was offered on Ash Wednesday in the Church of the Rosary alongside the spot where Our Lady appeared on that day 100 years ago, and the usual Rosary recitation and procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the ranks of the sick followed in the afternoon.

On the day before there was a Pontifical Mass offered by Bishop Pierre Marie Theas of Tarbes and Lourdes. In mid-afternoon Pontifical Vespers were sung, with a sermon on the "visionary who died a nun" delivered by Bishop Henri Audet of Auch. That night, the famous torchlight procession took place, in which all the pilgrims sang the Lourdes hymn.

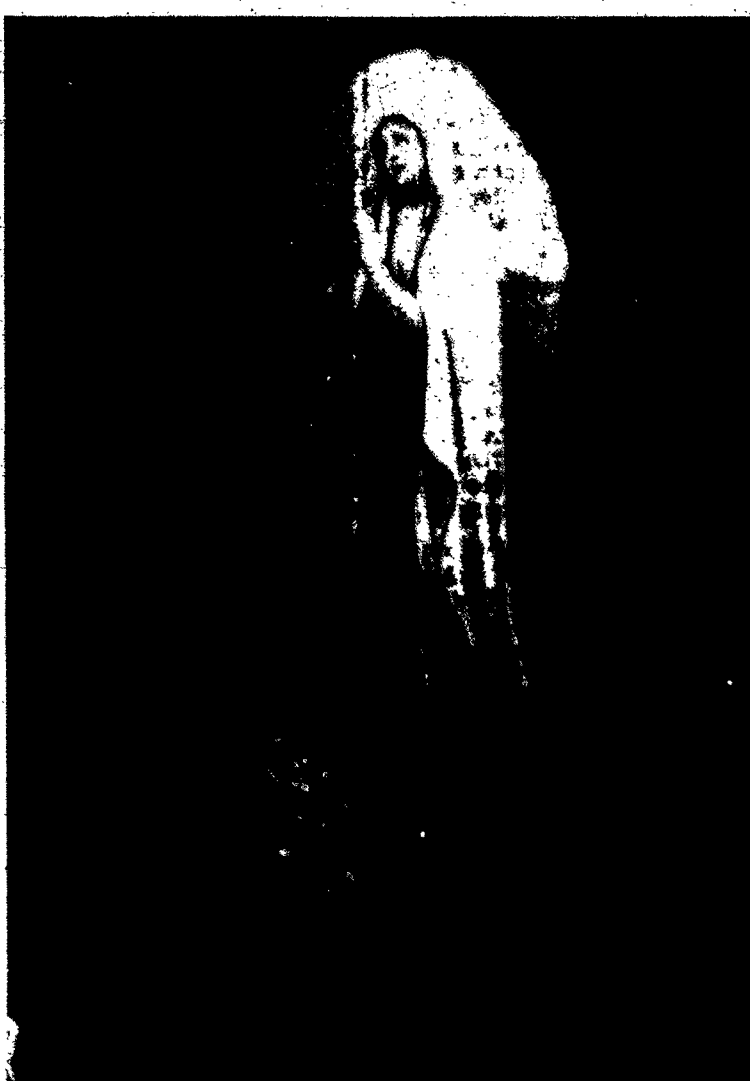
An interesting feature of the opening day of the centenary year (Feb. 11) was a procession of people from the Basque country.

There were about 10,000 of them, almost all men. Led by Bishop Paul Gouyon of Bayonne, these people from the Pyrenees Mountains south and west of Lourdes made their singing of the Lourdes hymn reverberate through the town.

The famous refrain—"Ave, Ave, Ave Maria" which is the same in every language—was intelligible to a bystander who did not know Basque, locally called "the only language the devil can't understand."

At a Mass celebrated by Bishop Gouyon, about the only non-Basques present were some Americans who were part of a pilgrimage led by Bishop Christopher Welton of Springfield. It took Bishop Gouyon, assisted by three priests, more than half an hour to distribute Holy Communion. All during the distribution of Holy Communion, the congregation and a boys' choir from Bayonne sang Basque hymns.

Many of the pilgrims to Lourdes are sick people, but



Our Lady of Lourdes — an artist's drawing depicts the vision described by St. Bernadette Soubirous who saw the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes grotto in 1858. Through this week at famous shrine opened centenary observance of apparitions.

many more of them are persons who come seeking spiritual graces or simply to honor the Mother of God.

But if sick people do come seeking cures, they seem to come not in self-pity but with the proud knowledge that this is their city. For as His Holiness Pope Pius XII said in his encyclical, The Pilgrimage to Lourdes, last July, it is they "who are truly welcomed and honored at Lourdes as the suffering members of Our Lord."

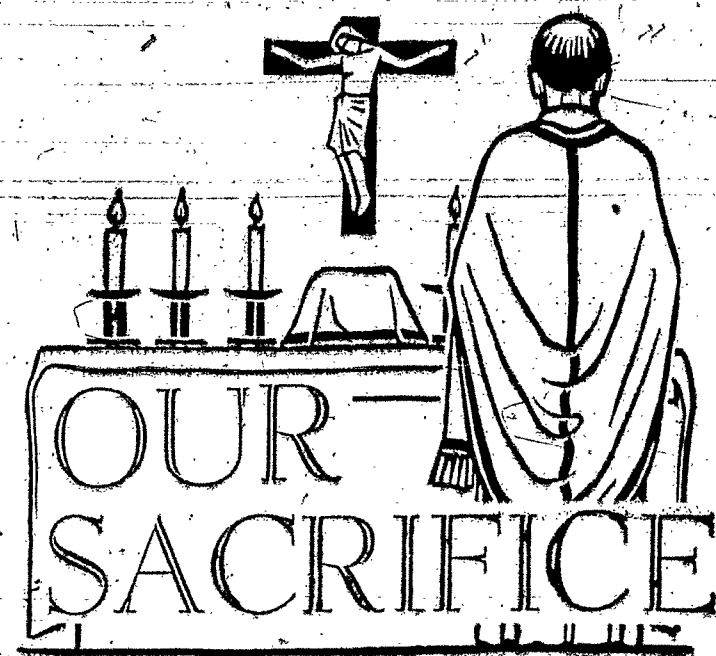
And, whether a physical ailment or not, they come to understand the words of the encyclical: "Perhaps nowhere else than at Lourdes does one feel so moved to prayer, to the forgetting of oneself and to charity."

All pilgrims, well and sick, see that the hallowed ground where Our Lady appeared is, if nothing else, a center of the Mass and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. They understand, thereby, the words of the Pope in his encyclical:

"Everything in Mary raises us to the praise of the Adorable Trinity. . . . So it was that Bernadette, praying her Rosary before the grotto, learned from the lips and expression of the Holy Virgin how she should give glory to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."



Pilgrims numbering in tens of thousands were at Lourdes this week to fulfill Blessed Virgin's request of century ago for "Prayer, Penance!"



By FATHER HENRY ATWELL WE SPEAK TO GOD

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass begins with the sign of the cross.

This sacred sign will be repeated at every high point of the Mass ritual to emphasize over and over that here at this altar Christ's great sacrifice of Golgotha is now repeated and renewed according to our Lord's own command, "Do this in memory of Me."

The priest stands at the foot of the altar as the servers kneel. Following the sign of the cross, priest and servers say alternately verse by verse Psalm 42, "I will go to the altar of God, the ancient pilgrim song of the Jews as they approached their temple atop Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

LENTE FEATURE

This is the second in a series of articles explaining the history and the ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

the highest and on earth peace to men of good will."

This song of the angels expresses the whole purpose of our Mass, that we might render the homage we owe to God, and receive from Him the graces and blessings we need for soul and body.

Indeed, "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee!"

ALL OF US come to Mass with our burdens, our sorrows, our special anxieties and needs.

The priest now "collects" all these separate, individual desires into one dramatic Collect prayer. Before doing so, however, he kisses the altar, turns to the people to salute them, "Domine vobiscum — the Lord be with you."

This ancient greeting used to be the way Christians met one another. It is used at Mass just before the priest says or does some ritual to which he wants the people to pay good attention.

We reply to the priest, "Et cum spiritu tuo. . . . And (the Lord) is in your soul too."

Thus united with his flock, the priest extends his hands to lift his people's prayer "through Christ our Lord" up to the throne of God. The people then give their firm assent to the prayer of the priest by their whole-hearted "Amen."

The Collect prayer, like the Introit, changes according to the feast day.

EACH COLLECT has three parts: a salute to God the Father, the statement of our request, and the conclusion that we speak to God "through Christ Thy Son, our Lord" who lives and reigns "in union with the Holy Spirit."

AN EXAMPLE of this three part style is seen in this first Sunday of Lent Collect:

(1) O God, each year Thou dost purify the Church through the Lenten observance.

(2) May the good works of Thy Church obtain for us the grace we ask for through our self denial.

(3) Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who lives and reigns with Thee in union with the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

NOW WE HAVE spoken our part. It is time for us to sit down, to be quiet, to listen as God speaks to us in the Epistle, the Gospel and the Sermon.

The first part of the Mass from the prayers at the foot of the altar through the Collect recalls how we visit the home of friends or neighbors.

As we come to the door, we stamp off the snow or slush from our boots, ring the bell, greet them, perhaps compliment them for a neat house, and then speak our message. Then politely we give our friends a chance to reply.

So also at Mass we come to the House of God.

We wipe away the stains of sin by the Confiteor. We knock at God's gate with the repeated Kyrie. We praise Him in the Gloria and state our request in the Collect.

Now we must give attention to God's reply.

Next week: God speaks to us!

U.S. Family

Lourdes—A hillside monument to the rear of the Lourdes basilica proved one of the most poignant sites of the entire sanctuary to a New York state family here for the opening of the centenary year.

Walter J. Steffan of Hamburg, N.Y., said he and his family were very impressed by the statue, which had been donated to the shrine by an Italian woman. Depicting a blind man reaching out to touch a cross, it bears the inscription, "Regaining one's faith is more important than regaining one's sight."

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