

Church In Japan

First Century In Freedom

By FATHER CLEMENT VAUDREY, O.F.M.

Tokyo — (NC) — A hundred years ago — on September 5, 1839 — Japan witnessed the arrival of the first Catholic priest in modern times.

Following a period of relatively slow progress, the Church today is growing swiftly. Since the end of the war the Catholic population has risen 200 per cent, to 266,000.

Between 1945 and the present the number of Catholic religious, educational and social welfare institutions has trebled, while the influence of the Church in the nation's life has increased to an even greater extent.

To mark the centenary of the Church's rebirth in this country a 250-page pictorial review entitled "A Century of Progress" has been published here, under the direction of Father William Phour, M.M., Maryknoll superior in Japan.

THE FIRST PRIEST to come to Japan in the modern era was Father Girard of the Parish Foreign Mission Society who landed at Kanagawa as chaplain and interpreter of the French legation then being established.

By 1829 the once flourishing Church in Japan had been virtually destroyed by persecution. The faith was brought here first in 1549 by St. Francis Xavier and missionaries' efforts

were at first welcomed by the country's rulers. By the end of the 16th century Catholics numbered about 300,000, but persecution had already begun.

In 1614 an edict to destroy the Church here was issued by the new master of Japan, the shogun Tokugawa Iyeyasu.

When Christians in Kyushu began an armed revolt which culminated in the battle of Shimonabara in 1638, the Tokugawa government set about the ruthless extermination of the Catholic faith. Japan then cut itself off from all contact with the outside world in the "sakoku" (sealed country) policy which was enforced for almost 200 years.

The isolation of the sakoku was shattered when U.S. warships under Commodore Perry bombarded Shimonoseki in 1853. A year later, Perry returned, sailed into Yedo Bay. He signed a trade treaty with the Japanese government on behalf of President Fillmore which restored Japan to the family of nations.

In order to be ready for this reopening of Japan, the Holy See had gone so far as to erect a Vicariate Apostolic of Japan in 1846, twelve years before a priest could enter the country. The Vicar Apostolic was Mgr. Auguste Fourcade who had gone to Okinawa from Macao, China, in 1843 to prepare for the reopening by studying the Japanese language.

Mgr. Fourcade's first official act as Vicar Apostolic was to sail to within sight of the forbidden coast of Japan and consecrate the country and its people to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This act of consecration was formally ratified by the Japanese hierarchy in 1848 and Our Blessed Mother under that title is Patroness of Japan.

Although Christianity was still proscribed in Japan, the government by virtue of the treaty of 1854, granted to foreign powers the right to erect places of worship for seamen and traders at the treaty ports of Nagasaki and Yokohama.

The French legation took advantage of this to acquire a site on the Yokohama waterfront in 1860. Father Girard, who had been nominated head of the Japanese mission by the Holy See, collected funds and on November 17, 1861, the first Catholic church in Japan since the persecution was dedicated to the Sacred Heart.

INTRIGUED by the presence of a Catholic church, Japanese flock to visit it. Sometimes these visitors exceeded 1,000 in a single day. When Father Girard began to give instructions, officials sent constables to surround the church area.

As a discouragement, 50 of the visitors were thrown into prison and were released only when the French legation protested to the government. The incident became famous as the "Case of the Yokohama Rescued."

The first Catholic missionaries here were amazed to find thousands of Christians who had persevered despite the long and bitter persecution. These old Christians were concentrated mostly at Nagasaki and on the nearby Goto Islands.

These old Christians were discovered by Father Petitjean who went to Nagasaki on his arrival from Okinawa in 1882. Largely through the generosity of Emperress Eugenie of France, he was able to build the church at Oura which is still the cathedral of the Archdiocese of Nagasaki.

It was in this church on March 17, 1865, that the first group of old Christians manifested themselves to the priest.

The discovery led to a flare-up of the persecution which was directed principally against the Catholic village of Urakami. Several mass arrests were made and 3,500 Christians were banished to 21 different regions.

Despite the persecution, Catholics continued to make themselves known to Father Petitjean. In 1871 there were as many as 1,700 while in the same year 300 pagans asked for baptism.

Quite suddenly, the ban on Christianity was lifted and the notice boards proscribing the faith were taken down. This was in 1873.

When the persecution ended in 1873, there were 15,000 Catholics, 29 priests and five Sisters in Japan. The Sisters were members of the Congregation of the Child Jesus who reached Yokohama in 1874.

As Catholicism in Japan was virtually nonexistent outside Nagasaki and the foreign settlements, the missionaries eagerly awaited the day when they



Just Ducky And Me

Crescent Springs, Ky. — (RNS) — Quick and Mac, pet ducks belonging to nine-year-old Frances Barton (right), of Columbus, O., get a lift to the lake of the Villa Madonna Academy in Crescent Springs, Ky. Lending a helping hand is Sister Celine. Frances received the ducks last Easter when they were just ducklings. The attachment ripened during the summer and Frances was permitted to take her fine feathered friends with her to school.

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BOOK SHELF

He Fled The Tiara

By SISTER MARGARET TERESA
Nazareth College

A Florentine Portrait: St. Philip Benizi, by D. B. Wyndham Lewis, Sheed, Sept. 9, '39. 137 pp. \$2.00.

What a century that was, the thirteenth!

Our is a kindergarten compared to it in some respects, says author Wyndham "Beachcomber" Lewis — but his biography of St. Philip brings out particularly one thing: the two eras have, alas, in common, violence, banditry, murder and axe being our own age does not so evidently share the capacity of medieval man to turn from devil-may-care violence to repentant, selfless sanctity, all in an instant, with conviction, with all his heart, with firm edicts and persevering practice.

BARNES SPRANG up everywhere in those days and people knew them for what they were. Even William like the frequently excommunicated Frederick II had such a care for the truth of God that they were earnest stampers-out of heresy between times.

The brilliant young medic who became St. Philip Benizi entered a new order founded in his own lifetime by seven saints: The Servants of Mary, and these were his mentors and companions not only in his missionary journeys but also in the long struggle to get official papal recognition of his most useful and prolific and holy Order.

It was not enemies who interfered, really. But just as he would draw near the goal, just as his Cardinal-ProteCTOR of the moment would have the Pope favorably inclined, despite an earlier Council of the Church which had decided on cutting down new orders, the Pope would die — be killed in the falling of a scaffold while inspecting a new papal annex, or catch a fever, or reach the bourne by sheer age.

POOR PHILIP sometimes had prophetic knowledge of these things, but must none the less proceed with supernatural patience on his ordinary human obstacle-course.

It must have been satisfying, then, when he was trying to bring peace to his city of Florence and converted Ubaldino. A member of the leading Guelph clan, a huge quarrelsome swashbuckler of immense strength named Ubaldino brought up from childhood in an atmosphere of flaming pride and vengeance . . . a formidable duelist . . . having made all possible reputation in his own clan, Ghibellines and others . . . took the Servite habit and, after many penances and vigils, Holy Orders."

And a few months later, Saint Philip took the big trouble-

German Youth Thanked For Aid

Duesseldorf — (RNS) — Archbishop Thomas Pothmann of Bangalore voiced his thanks here to German Catholic youths for aiding missionary and charitable efforts of the Church in India.

The Indian prelate lauded the young people for supporting various relief drives such as the "Hic for India" and "For the Hungry of the World" campaigns.

Duluth Bishop Dies At 74

Duluth — (NC) — Solemn Pontifical Requiem Mass for the Most Rev. Thomas Anthony Welch, 74, third Bishop of Duluth, was offered in Our Lady of the Rosary cathedral here.

Bishop Welch, who died (Sept. 9) here, had been in ill health for several weeks. He governed the Duluth diocese for 22 years and witnessed the Catholic population in the 10-county area of northeastern Minnesota grow from 61,000 to 100,000.

Since the end of World War II, the Church has made striking progress; firstly under the occupation government and later under a tolerant and understanding Japanese government.

"There Are Really Two Diseases: Leprosy, And Being A Leper!"

Leprosy is terrible enough, slowly eating the body away, feature by feature and limb by limb. But in most mission lands, "being a leper" is by far the grater torture.

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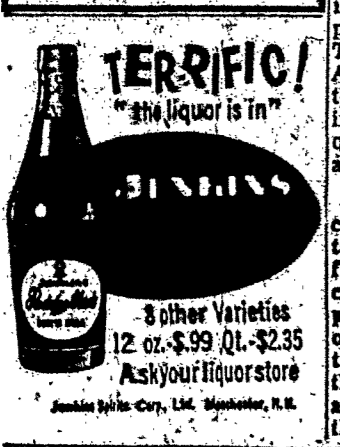
Leprosy itself when treated early can be entirely arrested. And by arresting it, missionaries are gradually relieving these poor sufferers of the cruel agonies of "being a leper."

Please help bring Christ's mercy to the leprosy. A dollar's worth of sulphone arrests an ordinary case.

ALL GIFTS IMMEDIATELY ACKNOWLEDGED

Send any offering you can, to Rev. Edward F. Gansche, S.J., Pres. The Catholic Medical Mission Board Dept. CJ 8 West 17th Street New York 11, N.Y.

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Boston Theater Honors Donors

Boston — (RNS) — Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston, said that Loew's Theater here, recently purchased by the archdiocese for year-round Church educational programming, will be named the Donnelly Memorial Theater in honor of one of New England's most distinguished Catholic families.

The prelate said that a "princely benefaction" made by Edward C. Donnelly, Jr., and his sister, Mrs. Raymond T. Stuart, would be used in connection with the purchase of the theater.

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