

Poland's Thousand Years of Christian Faith

By DONALD BROPHY
(N. C. W. C. News Service)

The 1,000th anniversary of Polish Christianity being celebrated this year recalls two historical events that cast an ironic shadow on the claims of the country's present-day communist rulers.

On May 3, the bishops of Catholic Poland, along with hundreds of clergy and thousands of the faithful, will assemble at the famed Marian shrine of Czestochowa to ask divine blessing on their country and to give thanks for blessings of the past thousand years.

Communist authorities in Warsaw have tried in recent months to take the spotlight away from the celebration. First, they have denied permission to foreign churchmen, even those from other communist countries, to visit Poland during the millennium period. Next, they have announced plans to stage large secular events such as Communist party rallies and athletic contests to detract from the religious services.

Failing this, the communist leaders will claim—as they have in the past—that 1966 marks the anniversary of the Polish nation not of the Catholic religion in Poland.

But the Polish people know better. They realize they are called to acknowledge a fact of history that today's communist rulers are most loath to admit—that Poland is and always has been a Christian nation.

The first Christians probably came into Poland from the south. They were Christian Moravians, driven out of their country by Hungarians, and they settled in the southern part of what is now Poland among Slavonic people who honored vengeful gods.

But the real birth of Christianity in Poland occurred during the reign of King Mieszko (or Mieczyslaw) who had united many Slavs under his rule at Poznan. In the year 963 the first German Christians began to penetrate Poland from the west.

Mieszko realized immediately that he must accept Western customs if he was to stem a threatened German invasion. He was helped by the fact that earlier Christians had made his subjects open to new ideas, and he was encouraged by his wife Dabrowka (or Dubrovka), a Christian princess from Bohemia.

Whatever his motives were, Mieszko in 966 was baptized a Christian, and his whole kingdom was converted with him. Mieszko became the first Polish ruler to be baptized a Christian. Mieszko made himself a tributary of the Western Emperor Otto I and placed his lands under the protection of the pope. Thus the German invasion was halted, and the religious future of Poland was settled in a single moment.

Christianity took root quickly in Poland. Under Mieszko's son Boleslaw, Gniezno became the first archiepiscopal See. The Benedictines arrived in 1008, and by 1200 the Church had won its independence from government control.

St. Anthony's Relics Honored

Lisbon—(RNS)—The remains of St. Anthony of Padua who died in 1231 will be brought from Italy to his native city here in June for public veneration.

One of the most popular saints in the Roman Catholic Church, St. Anthony was born in Lisbon in 1195 and joined the Franciscan Order in 1212. He had intended to enlist in the African missions, but illness and a storm brought him to Italy where he soon acquired a reputation as a preacher and saintly worker.

The saint's remains are to arrive here on June 4 and will be taken in procession to the cathedral. Among those expected to participate in the ceremonies are President Americo Deus Rodrigues Tomas and Manuel Goncalves Cardinal Cezejeria, Patriarch of Lisbon.

The religious turmoil of the Reformation affected Poland less than most European nations. Reformers were free to preach and hold office during the reign of King Sigismund II (1548-72), which marked a golden age of Polish culture. They won few converts, however, and their influence gradually waned.

By the turn of the century when the Jesuits began to arrive in great numbers, Poland had 20 archdioceses and 15 dioceses. There were 750 religious houses staffed by 20 orders for men and 15 orders of nuns.

It was a Jesuit named John Casimir who ruled Poland during the next great crisis of its history. Educated in France and made a cardinal, Casimir was called home at a time when Poland was being invaded by the Swedes under Charles X from the north, and by the Tartars and Cossacks from the east. He made an alliance with the Russian Czar, but finally was forced to flee into Silesia by the other invaders.

Then came the turning point that Poles still remember. With the government in flight, it was up to the clergy to rally

the people against the invaders. Citizens armed themselves to halt the Swedish invasion, but Charles' army swept through the country until it arrived in 1655 at the monastery at Czestochowa.

Two thousand crack Swedish soldiers attacked repeatedly, but the monastery, under the direction of Prior Augustyn Kordecki, would not fall. Finally, with their ranks broken by the attacks, the Swedes broke off the battle and withdrew from Poland.

In the following year at Lwow, John Casimir proclaimed

the Virgin Mary to be the protector and patron of Poland. The image of the "Black Madonna at Czestochowa" (which tradition says was painted by St. Luke) has since become the focal point and the symbol of Polish Christianity.

On May 3, Polish Catholics will return to Czestochowa to recall the conversion of King Mieszko 1,000 years ago. The communist rulers of 1966 are claiming that the celebration is an attempt by Church authorities to infringe on the rights of the modern state. To Catholics, it is the state that has failed to keep faith with the national heritage.



People of God

Sanctity in seventeen summers! Montserrat Grasas was born in Barcelona, Spain on July 10, 1941. After she had completed her primary education—she studied at Llar, a school of home economics run by the women's section of Opus Dei in Barcelona. She was so captivated by the spirit of the house that at the age of sixteen she sought admission to Opus Dei.

serene and happy acceptance of the will of God in all things. Dynamic, sociable, dressed with modesty and good taste, she was very interested in sports, tennis and skiing especially, and enjoyed dancing "sardanas," the popular Catalonian dance.

On June 1958, a bone cancer of the leg, which caused intense pain, was diagnosed by doctors. She bore this suffering with heroic acceptance and great cheerfulness to the moment of her death at the age of seventeen on Holy Thursday, after the recitation of the Angelus, her beatification was begun in March 26, 1959. The process of Barcelona on Dec. 19, 1962.

Montse, as she was known, never gave the impression of being extraordinary. It was as if she meant to tell others that sanctity is not something to be found outside the ordinary life, but rather in the simple, heroic

St. Ambrose

A Parish Prolific In its Vocations

St. Ambrose parish in Rochester is a striking example contrary to the present worldwide vocation crisis.

Still not half a century old, the parish counts an even 80 of its parishioners now in or close to the religious life of a priest, nun, brother or specialized lay apostle.

About 50 of the 80 attended a "homecoming" Mass and dinner there last Sunday afternoon.

Those who didn't come are off in distant mission outposts but many of these wrote Monsignor Arthur Katigan, pastor, that they'd be there "in spirit."

Last week's parish bulletin listed the names of its members in the service of the Lord and the list shows the parish can boast of 24 priests, 41 nuns, 2 brothers, 2 Gail workers, 1 catechist, 6 seminarians, 2 nun postulants and 2 candidates for men's religious orders.

Father John A. Morgan, pastor of the churches at Scipio Center, Genoa and Fleming, dean of the clergy who came from St. Ambrose parish, attributed the flourishing vocation condition there, after God, to the character of the home life in which the vocations were nourished and encouraged.

He cited the case of both Pope St. Pius X at the beginning of this century and more recently that of Pope John XXIII, both of whom came from humble homes which were rich in faith and its reverent practice.

This "atmosphere" is the necessary condition, Father Morgan said, for most religious vocations to develop.

Another factor, it seems to us, also needs to be credited, and that is the fact that St. Ambrose has somehow preserved the spirit of a small parish despite its rapid growth and present large numbers. The very fact that so many of its alumni returned for this homecoming—and the fact also that they were invited—is evidence of this spirit.

St. John Mary Vianney, the Cure of Ars, once said the spiritual level of parishioners is usually a step below that of their pastor. If he is a saint, the parishioners will be devout; if he is devout, they will fulfill their religious obligations; if all he does is what Church law requires, the people are lost. St. Ambrose parish is an indication that its pastors have been holy men—Father Walter B. McCarthy, Monsignor Frank Mason and not excluding Monsignor Ratican.

In our observance of this Sunday, April 24, as World Vocation Day, we can hope that the spirit of St. Ambrose parish will continue to survive—and be contagious.

—Father Henry A. Atwell



Major observances marking the 1,000th anniversary of Christianity in Poland will be held in the Jasna Gora Monastery in Czestochowa, southern Poland. The ceremonies, scheduled for the first week in May, will be presided over by Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński, Primate of Poland. The monastery houses the famed shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa, patroness of the country.

What Students Read

Maryknoll, N.Y. — Action-orientated students revealed non-conformist reading habits this April in reply to a question "What books have most influenced your thinking recently?"

A survey of over 820 students applying for summer project work in Central America with the Conference on Inter-American Students (CIASP) produced some 600 titles (in reply) ranging from the Bible to "Zorba the Greek."

The book receiving the highest number of mentions was Eric Fromm's "The Art of Loving" (61). The next top 6 choices were:

- "The Secular City" by Harvey Cox (34).
- "The Prophet" by Khalil Gibran (28)
- "Five Families" by Oscar Lewis (28)
- "The Bible" (26)
- "Black Like Me" by John H. Griffin (23)
- "Children of Sanchez" by Oscar Lewis (23)

The fact that almost all these students from over 80 colleges and seminaries in the U.S. and 29 in Canada will be working in Mexico explained the popularity of Oscar Lewis' books.

Two other individuals who ranked high in student choices for several of their works were Teilhard de Chardin whose "Phenomenon of Man" (17), "Divine Milieu" (13) and "Evolution" (9) were listed; and Dr. Thomas Dooley whose "Night They Burned the Mountain" (17), "Deliver Us From Evil" (15) and "Edge of Tomorrow" (14) were noted along with the "Life of Tom Dooley" (10).

The recently controversial "Honest to God" by John A. T. Robinson received only 8 notices, and J. D. Salinger's "Catchers in the Rye" and "Franny and Zooey" 8 and 11 notices respectively.

The students who supplied this information are at present involved in a four-month preparation program to ready themselves for eight to twelve weeks of work in Mexico. They have already been assigned project sites in Mexico which range from hard work construction jobs, to teaching Bible classes by film strips, operating simple dispensaries and contributing to community development projects.

CIASP is a student-directed group that coordinates collegiate involvement in such projects. The National Secretariat is located at "World Campus Desk," here.

Capuchin Beatified

Vaticana City—(NC)—Italian Capuchin Father Ignatius of St. Agatha, who died in 1770, was beatified in St. Peter's basilica Sunday, April 17.

Blessed Ignatius was born in Turin, Italy, in 1686 and entered the Capuchins in 1716. He won fame for sanctity for his pastoral work, for preaching and as a confessor. He died in 1770.

Reform of Curia Takes Big Step Forward

By GARY McEOIN

Even before I knew who he was, I was fascinated by a 54-year-old Belgian priest, a powerful heavy-set man, who was one of the dominant figures of the recent conference of theologians of many faiths at Notre Dame's Center for Continuing Education. His two formal addresses dealt with aspects of Vatican II's twin pillars, the constitution on the Church and the decree on the Church in the Modern World. Even more striking were his incisive informal comments in the wide-ranging exchanges during the week of discussions. He was at home with repartee, quick to turn a joke against himself.

Canon Charles Moeller is particularly important right now because he reveals at least part of what Pope Paul had in mind when he assured the Council Fathers late last year that he would carry out the reform of the Roman Curia which they had requested. He is the recently named sub-secretary of the Congregation for Doctrine, the updated and renamed Holy Office.

As sub-secretary, Canon Moeller is third man in the Congregation, after the 75-year-old Cardinal Ottaviani and the 74-

year-old Archbishop Pietro Parente. Until this year, the title was "commissario," and the functions included that of presiding judge when the Holy Office tried charges of apostasy, heresy and schism. The commissario was a carryover from the Inquisition, which became the Holy Office in 1942, and its holder was always a member of the Dominican Order.

Father R. Verardo, the last commissario, had been named apostolic administrator of Amalfi in southern Italy. The techniques of "promoting out" is known to all civil services. It fulfills the assurance Pope Paul gave the Curia last year that the reform will take account "of the respect which persons and traditions merit." But it also ensures that it will not be held back by the longstanding practice of automatic internal promotion.

It would have been difficult for Pope Paul, who loves resounding gestures more than precise statements of intention, to find a better man to mark a new start. The Congregation for Doctrine, the Pope had said, will be less concerned with defending orthodoxy than with looking for truth wherever it is to be found.

great-grandfather, who taught the history of philosophy at Louvain University, his family is renowned in Belgium for its dedication to the search for truth.

The talks given by Canon Moeller at Notre Dame, like all his writings, reflect the amazing range of his interests and associations. I was particularly struck by his sympathetic analysis of human culture and his ability to move freely from the post-Christian West to the horizons of Africa and Asia. I was accordingly little surprised when I learned that one of his early intellectual guides was Dom Lou, a Chinese diplomat who became a Benedictine.

I was equally impressed by his familiarity with theological thought among "other Christians" both of the East and of the West, as well as by his disarming way of appealing to it as a witness to and enrichment of the message of Christ.

Invidious as are personal comparisons, I feel I should mention the contrast between the Canon's feeling for all current forms of thought and expression and the rigid scholastic mental framework of the one Italian participant at Notre Dame, Bishop Carlo Colombo, often described as Pope Paul's theologian. As

one theologian commented to me, "What he said might have been written before the Council." As a "progressive" in Italy, Bishop Carlo gives point to the movement to de-Italianize the Curia with all convenient speed.

Canon Moeller's ecumenical expression is a deep part of his own culture. As a teenager, he was already taking part in the very tentative approaches which were then barely tolerated for Catholics. His great teacher was Dom Lambert Beauduin, founder of the Monastery of Unieon now located at Chevetogne, Belgium. He is president and inspirer of the ecumenical study seminars held since 1946 at Chevetogne.

A "peritus" at the Council, Canon Moeller helped to write the documents on the Church, on revelation, on ecumenism, and on non-Christian religions. He has himself said that his great fortune was that he came to theology through the Bible and the Fathers on the other hand, and the "lived liturgy" on the other.

"A man of truth and a man of justice," such is the description recently given him by a Brussels publication. With such a man, the Congregation for Doctrine starts its service to the Church auspiciously.

The Catholic COURIER Journal

Vol. 77 No. 30 Friday, April 22, 1966

MOST REV. JAMES E. KEARNEY, D.D., President

Published every Friday by the Rochester Catholic Press Association

MAIN OFFICE 85 Solo St. — 454-7050 — Rochester, N.Y. 14604
ELMIRA OFFICE 117 Robinson Bldg., Lake St. RE 2-6688 or RE 2-8423
AUBURN OFFICE 168 E. Genesee St. AL 2-4446

Second class postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.
Single copy 14¢; 1 year subscription in U.S. \$5.00
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