

American Devotion to Mary

PART II

The example set by the pioneers led to a pattern among American Catholics. Cathedrals and churches and chapels, too many to enumerate, carry Mary's titles across the country. Notre Dame and all its lovely variants have become titles for every sort of Catholic apostolic enterprise: Sodality, Legion of Mary, Family Rosary.



In 1913 Bishop Thomas J. Shahan, fourth rector of the Catholic University of America, suggested a national shrine of the Immaculate Conception "a large and beautiful church in honor of our Blessed Mother, built by nationwide cooperation at the nation's capital . . . a great hymn in stone." Most of the crypt area and the foundation of the upper church were built by 1931. In 1954 work began on the actual upper church and was sufficiently along to permit the solemn dedication on November 20, 1959. Since then much more has been done, and the Shrine, open daily and the scene of many

religious celebrations, is still being completed. Contributions of Catholics country-wide maintain the magnificent church as their offerings paid for its building. They were given as testimony to the special place the Mother of God, Mary Immaculate, holds in the hearts and religious life of American Catholics. Along with the many Washington visitors, of all faiths, who visit 'the Shrine' in touring the Capital City, more and more groups are coming on pilgrimage, even from distant dioceses, and focusing on Mary's Shrine as a place of prayer and inspiration.

All of this history seems to point to a strong Marian devotion which thrives even today. Yet we often hear conflicting testimony. We read reports of a great decline in sermons and instructions about Mary, the waning of many favorite forms of devotion to her in American churches and schools. Many Catholic Americans are convinced that the bishops gathered at Vatican II did downgrade the Virgin Mother. Father Eamon R. Carrol, a Carmelite Father and a faculty member of the School of Theology at Catholic University, offers assurance that Marian devotion is in a very healthy condition in this country. His testimony bears credibility for he has recently returned from a six-month tour of the United

States speaking to audiences of priests, men and women religious and lay groups in thirty States and has delivered within that period some 160 lectures on Mariology.

While he has found 'that things have changed with respect to the Mother of Jesus,' many of the changes have been totally for the good — for a more wholesome devotion.

There is here and elsewhere the rediscovered emphasis on Mary as a woman of faith, as the Scriptures reveal her, and as the II Vatican Council insistently repeats. The woman, whom we honor in the first place in the Communion of Saints, whose name now comes first in the prayer of remembrance in all four Eucharistic prayers, is the woman who walked a pilgrimage of faith, even as we are doing now.

"She stands out among the Lord's lowly and poor who confidently look for salvation from him and receive it. With this exalted daughter of Sion the times are fulfilled, after the long awaiting for the promise, and the new economy inaugurated when the Son of God takes on human nature from her in order to free men from sin by the mystery of His flesh." Constitution on the Church — Chapter 8.

to be continued

The Slot Man

By Carmen Viglucci

On Reaching 40 Years

A couple of weeks ago I became 40 years old, a fact that has little significance other than it represented a milestone which, I



suppose, causes many people to reflect on their life and times.

I have always felt dimly that I would rather have lived in some other, earlier, time. A period before the mechanization of the world with its attendant stress, fumes, chicanery and complexities. In a more peaceful era with Grandma Moses' backdrops and without jangling telephones and stock exchanges and squalid movie houses showing squalid films.

That I would rather have been a contemporary of Abraham Lincoln or to have known Francis of Assisi.

Then something Archbishop Sheen said occurred to me — "These are exciting times in which to live."

And he's right for if I had lived in any other time I wouldn't have been around:

To hear Winston Churchill.

When Giuseppe Roncalli served the world as Pope John XXIII.

When John F. Kennedy became the first Catholic elected as president of the United States.

When wars became subject to serious moral scrutiny.

When polio was defeated and when man turned his attention and scientific prowess toward the same fate for cancer.

To revel in the great New York Yankee baseball teams of the 1950s and to see the great Willie Mays.

When the phrase "all men are created equal" began to stretch to include women.

To be regaled by master storytellers such as Ernest Hemingway and Graham Greene.

To see the beginning of the breakdown of racial bigotry in the United States.

To understand the Mass.

To delve through the Sunday Times.

When the American Indian is being placed in his true historical perspective.

To drink beer at Billy Mitchell's and to share time with the contemporary people I have come to know.

To have the parents I was blessed with.

To fall in love with the girl who became my wife and to have the three children who spend their time with us and make life a vibrant experience.

To enjoy the blessings which truly are countless and to realize that their source, God, cannot be diminished, not even by the cacophony, instability, tumult and materialism of that otherwise year 1972.

Editorial

Latest Dispute Raises Old Question

The Vietnam War, which has come closer to tearing this country apart than any conflict since the Civil War, has produced a new rip in the national pattern in the dispute over the bombing of the dikes in North Vietnam.

Just as certain previous events of this war, such as the Bay of Tonkin incident, the bombing of key North Vietnam cities, the Cambodian incursion, My Lai, the dikes issue has become so coated with a sticky morass of charges, countercharges, changing and conflicting reports that it now defies human capability to ascertain what really happened.

When charges were first heard that the dikes were attacked, and everyone seems agreed that his would be a reprehensible action, it appeared the administration position that if it happened at all it was the result of human error.

Still charges flew around and feelings polarized, as usual. Then Ramsey Clark

visited North Vietnam, said that the dikes were indeed bombed, a not very startling statement since a host of other public figures had made the same claim. Then came the Pentagon, however, to suddenly produce pictures showing military installations at the dikes.

This raised any number of questions. Why didn't the administration explain this before? Does it mean that the dikes really were intentionally bombed despite previous denials? Why aren't we Americans being entrusted with enough information to draw valid conclusions about such situations — especially in light of the fact that we will hear of rumors from all around the world? Why are we treated with Madison Avenue condescension when we vitally need to know as much as possible to make rational judgments about this war? How can the administration complain about lack of American support for the war when it consistently refuses to be straightforward with the American

people about American part in the conflict?

Lest this appear a one-sided attack on this administration, let it be understood that previous administrations also have been less than honest with the American people about the conduct of the war.

Now, as if to show that no respite is in sight, the Democratic White House aspirant, in a space of three hours last week, denied, then confirmed that he had sent a representative to Paris for secret talks with the North Vietnamese. The same old pattern of chicanery — and, in this case, possibly for the worst of reasons, to gain political advantage.

Not only should we be asking when is this war going to end, but perhaps even more importantly when are politicians going to stop serving up lies, half-truths and self-serving statements to the American people. We might do a better job of handling the truth than those ladling out information to us.