

The Roman Holy Year Churches:

By Father Robert F. McNamara

"You will stretch out your hands and somebody else will take you where you would rather not go." So our Lord said in prophecy to St. Peter, foretelling his future martyrdom. Peter was indeed made captive in Rome around the year 65, and was crucified upside down in the Circus of Nero at the foot of Vatican Hill. His body was buried on the slope nearby.

St. Peter's Basilica rises over the site of this burial. Even during the Roman persecutions St. Peter's tomb, like that of St. Paul, was surmounted by a little marble shelter, which was discovered in the excavations of three decades ago. After peace came to the Church, the Emperor Constantine took pains to raise, around this simple memoria, a splendid five-apsed basilica, 395 feet long which was dedicated in 324 A.D. In front of it was a huge square atrium or entrance garden, reached from the public square by 35 steps, which pilgrims used to mount on their knees. This church remained until the year 1505, when its aged and perilous walls and roof were removed to make way for the present structure.

When the decision had been made to build a new St. Peter's, the architect Bramante was engaged. Bramante designed a new church with a flat dome mounted on a floorplan of Greek-cross design. Bramante died in 1514 without accomplishing much. He was succeeded by

Peruzzi and the painter Raphael who had been his assistants. Then Sangallo Younger was chosen as architect. When Sangallo died in 1546, the great artist Michelangelo Buonarroti was chosen; and it took several more architects after Michelangelo to finish the job.

There was only one melancholy aspect to the production of this magnificent shrine: in 1517 Luther's protest against the alms-indulgence granted for its construction, launched the Protestant Reformation. Not until 1626 was the present basilica ready for dedication.

It was worth waiting a century for. In the great piazza, architect Bernini's colossal colonnade reaches out its two arms to welcome us, and we are greeted by the central Egyptian obelisk, which stood in the Circus of Nero nearby when St. Peter was crucified there. Michelangelo's dome is immense but seems as light as a bubble. When we enter through the Holy Door of the pilgrims, we may be disappointed: although the interior is 613 feet long, it seems small. It seems so, that is, until we approach the holy water font held by little cherubs, and find that these "little cherubs" are six feet tall. In other words, the interior is so perfectly proportioned that one is not overwhelmed by the immensity. It was in this main aisle that the bishops of the Second Vatican Council sat (1962-1965). (The First Vatican Council, 1869-1870, took place in

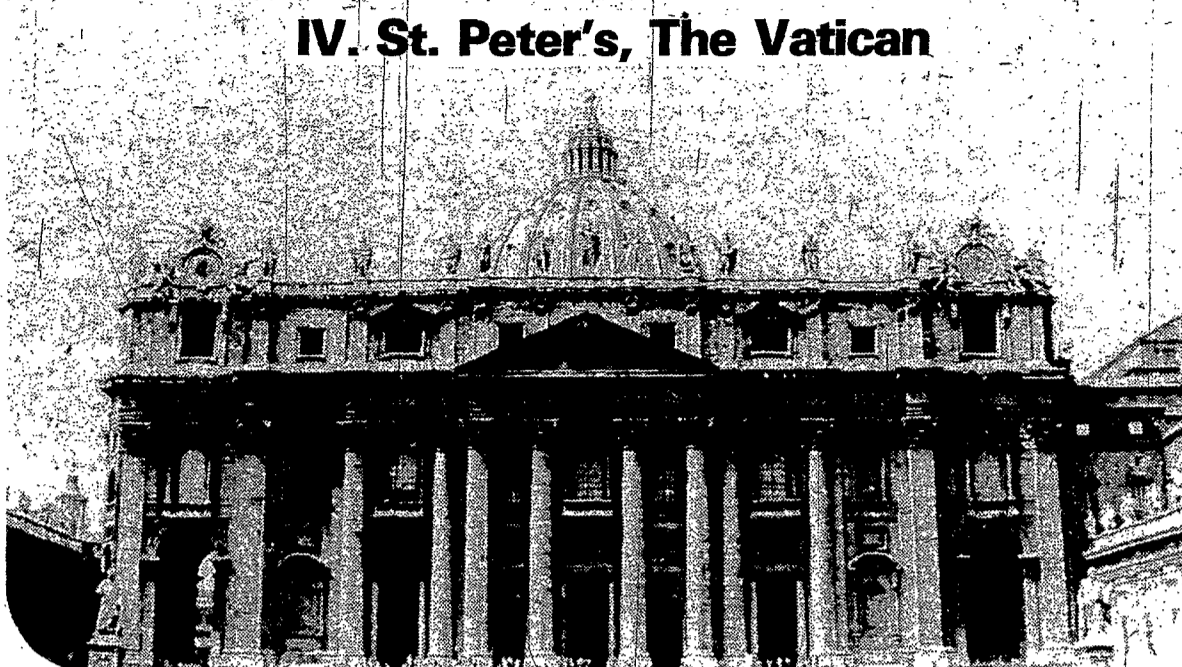


Photo by Anthony J. Costello

IV. St. Peter's, The Vatican

a transept, for the number of bishops was considerably less.)

In St. Peter's, as nowhere else, we come face to face with Christian history. What monarchs have come here as pilgrims: from Charlemagne and Alfred the Great to Christina of Sweden and Alfonso XIII. What saints have flocked hither to venerate the remains of Peter (indeed, to be martyred for doing so, like SS. Marius and Martha and St. Zoe).

Surely Heaven alone is peopled with more saints than is St. Peter's: the Apostles SS. Simon and Jude; St. John Chrysostom; St. Gregory Nazianzen; and more than 30 canonized popes, the last of them St. Pius X.

The pilgrim to the tomb of Peter is therefore only one of the millions who have flocked to this center of the Christian world, to "see Peter," and in seeing him, to

rejoice in the Church which Christ so long ago founded upon him and his faith. As we kneel before Peter's altar with its scores of flickering lamps, we have only to look upward into the spacious, lightsome dome of Michelangelo to know that we have "come home." For around that dome, in Latin, runs the promise of Christ: "You are Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the underworld cannot hold out against it."

Holy Year Tips for the Sightseer

Many who on the occasion of the Holy Year will be making their first trip to Rome will find countless questions on their lips as they visit the hallowed spots making up the center of Christianity.

When the Pope speaks, at which window does he stand? Where is the tomb of Pope John XXIII? How do you get to the Sistine Chapel?

Prophetically hearing these questions, the Osservatore Romano has printed a review of a guide book, *The Vatican and Christian Rome*, which may interest the Holy Year Pilgrim. Here are some excerpts of the review:

It is possible to give an overall and exhaustive answer, in outline, to those who wish to have a general picture of the contents of the Vatican and their real significance, even in the brevity of a visit or rapid reflection.

This is what an agreeable volume that has just been published by the Vatican Polyglot Press, and is on sale in the Vatican Bookshop, has succeeded in doing. Entitled *The Vatican and Christian Rome*, it has a great many illustrations and a text easy to read. The book is published in six languages: Italian, French, English, German, Spanish, and Portuguese, and is the most up-to-date and practical manual for the Holy Year visitor, completing the Pilgrim's Book, which is above all the book of community piety of those celebrating the Jubilee.

The illustrations, in black and white and in color, inserted in the text with a tasteful regard for layout, give a visual representation of the most interesting and significant things described. Some items are right up to date such as the plan of the State of Vatican City with the new names of the streets; the plan of the Catacombs and details of the new Vatican collection of modern religious art.

The text, above all, is excellent, because it succeeds in explaining what the Vatican is and how it works, before describing its

environment and what it offers the visitor in the way of aesthetic contemplation. In this way, the reader is able to understand that the Vatican is in the first place a "city of the soul" (chap. 1), which sprang up round Peter's tomb and is the see of his successor, the visible foundation of a society which is communion, and which is called the Church, founded by Christ for a universal and transcendent purpose. After explaining the relationship between the Pope and the Bishops, the book goes on to speak about the Roman Curia, the instrument used by the Pope to exercise his mission as Head of the Church.

The Square and the Basilica of St. Peter are the subject of Chap. 2, which gives a sober but exhaustive description of the historical and artistic aspects of what is the heart of the Vatican. The plan of the basilica is extremely interesting, exactly indicating 80 or so of its most significant points.

The book then turns to the city of Rome, where the great basilicas, the catacombs, the national Churches, the pontifical Universities, the generalates of the religious orders prolong in time the sacred character of this city. Chap. 3 is dedicated to Christian Rome, while the 4th which is longer, contains a detailed description of the pontifical museums and art galleries.

The visitor to the Vatican art museums perceives the different historical layers of a continuous effort to collect, preserve, arrange and put at the disposal of everyone masterpieces of all times, often saving them from ruin or destruction. One has the almost palpable sensation that someone in the 16th, 17th or 18th century has worked for us, so that today we can see, become enthusiastic, intoxicated, fill our soul and our heart.

In this light the patronage of the Popes takes on its true significance, not of dynastic prestige, but of real service. The profusion of means used by the Vatican for this titanic undertaking throughout the centuries, against which only mean

voices could be raised, is testified by the list of titles in this fourth chapter. It is seen from them that there are ten Museums (the Egyptian Gregorian, the Pio Clementine, the Chiaramonti, the Pagan Museum of the Library, the Sacred Museum of the Library, the Gregorian Etruscan Museum, the Gregorian Pagan Museum, the Pisan Christian Museum, the Missionary and Ethnological Museum, the Historical Coach Museum); there are five art galleries (Pinacoteca, modern religious Collection, geographical maps, Tapestries and Candelabra) in addition to the Sistine Chapel,

Man May Be Charged In Slaying of Fetuses

Camden, N.J. [RNS] — The county prosecutor here is seeking an indictment against a 24-year-old Camden man, charged with the murder of twin fetuses when he allegedly shot a pregnant woman during a holdup attempt — and the case is expected to bring a new focus on rights of the unborn.

The defendant in the case which is unprecedented in New Jersey, is Winfield Anderson, who is charged with shooting a 21-year-old woman seven months pregnant. The fetuses were removed after the shooting but died within 15 hours. The woman recovered from the wound.

Camden County Prosecutor Thomas Shusted said "there's no doubt in my mind that these were living human beings. Of course, we will have to prove in court that they were living persons."

The case, some observers said ultimately could force the U.S. Supreme Court to define more precisely the rights of the unborn and when life begins. In its 1973 ruling on abortion, the court did

BARGAIN SALE

To herald in Spring, Most Precious Blood Church is sponsoring a White Elephant Sale from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., May 3 and from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. May 4, in the school hall.

the Raphael Rooms and Loggias, the Borgia Apartment.

In the new modern art collection visitors can admire a picture by Rouault which is also reproduced in the volume (page 186) and is entitled "Eccè Homo." Sharply contrasted colors connected by strong black strokes make up Christ's face. It is a symbol of what we hope will take place also for readers of this precious and extremely up-to-date guides: that from the different features that compose this "city of the soul" they will see emerge the face of Christ, the real inspirer of his life and action.

not face the controversial question but did allow abortions during the first 24 weeks of pregnancy.

"It's an unusual case," said Shusted. "We had a death certificate before we had a birth certificate."

Health Careers Observed

Elmira — On Wednesday April 16, 225 Chemung County high school students participated in the Eighth Annual Health Career Day held at St. Joseph's Hospital, Arnot Ogden Memorial, and the Elmira Psychiatric Center.

With the cooperation of the American Lung Association, Finger Lakes Chapter, the students were taken on a tour of each of the facilities, shown films on health careers, and spent time observing health careers in action.

On Wednesday April 16, and Monday April 21 parents and students had the opportunity to hear Michael Johnston, guidance counselor at Notre Dame High School, and David Cheplick, Edison Tech counselor, and Chairman of the Local Health Careers Committee discuss the subject of health careers and how parents could aid the students in making a choice.

Holy Year Exhibit Opens In Vatican

Vatican City [RNS] — Pope Paul has inaugurated an exhibition of documents on the Roman Catholic Church's Holy Years through the centuries. It is the first exhibition of its kind.

The exhibition, which includes the Bull of Pope Boniface VIII, who inaugurated the first Jubilee Year in 1300, went on display Feb. 8 in the rooms of the Vatican's Secret Archives.

According to Cardinal Antonio Samore, librarian and archivist of the Holy Roman Church, the exhibition contains documents of "very great value... a precious source" for historical research.

The first three Holy Years were observed in 1300, 1350, and 1390. Subsequent observances were celebrated at 25-year intervals except in 1800 and 1850 when the French invasion of Italy and political turmoil in Italy made celebrations impossible.

All but a few of the earlier Holy Years were classified as ordinary. Several, like the one held in 1933 to commemorate the 19th century of the death and resurrection of Christ, were considered "extraordinary."

Nazareth Center Wins Award

The Nazareth Arts Center has been named one of six recipients of the 1975 State Medallion Tour Award. The center is one of half dozen sponsors of the tour, a project to bring high quality theater to the upstate area at reasonable prices. The tour project is fortified with funds from the State Council on the Arts.

State Sen. John Perry and State Assemblyman Thomas Frey will present the award to Dr. Alice Foley, president of Nazareth College, and Joseph Baranowski, director of the Arts Center, Tuesday April 21, the night the Medallion Tour opens in Rochester with "The Member of the Wedding."