

The Conversion of the Nations

Our Catholic Heritage

The Church Begins a Bloodless Conquest

By FATHER THOMAS McMANUS
 "We see what has become of her who appeared the mistress of the world. She is broken by all she has suffered . . . Ruins upon ruins everywhere . . . Where is the Senate? Where are the people?" (St. Gregory the Great d. 604)

The death of Rome is usually marked in the year 410 A.D. when the Visigoths sacked the city. The barbarian invasions were under way. For generations the Empire was swamped by waves of tribes migrating out of Germany. By the year 451 the remote cause of these epic upheavals became evident. Atilla and the Huns appeared at the gates of Rome. What happened next will never be forgotten as long as the history of the West is told.

The West was saved by the Bishop of Rome, St. Leo the Great. The Liber Pontificalis (530 A.D.) states simply:

"For the sake of the name of Rome, Leo undertook an embassy.

He rode out Attila, King of the Huns, and freed all of Italy from the dangers of the enemy."

Leo repeated his performance of fatherly heroism against Genseric and the Vandal army in 455 A.D.

To call the German tribes barbarians is a misnomer. They were in fact cultured peoples who were already Christians, although not Catholics. They embraced a form of Arianism. Under Gregory the Great, the Church came to realize that her future lay with these peoples. The Church had already begun one of the most sweeping, yet bloodless, conquests history has ever seen.

The bishops and the monks conquered the "barbarians" for the Catholic Faith. St. Benedict (d.543), the Father of Western Monasticism, formulated the discipline of the common life, and built the first of the great monasteries that formed the citadels of learning and civilization. Patrick (d.461) in Ireland and Boniface (d. 754) in Germany stamped their

nations forever with their genius. Celtic monks like St. Columbanus (d. 615) brought the Word through Britain to France and Italy. Charlemagne (d. 815) performed, "the deeds of God through the deeds of the Franks."

Scandinavia first heard the Good News from St. Ansgar (d.865). St. Cyril (d. 869) and St. Methodius (d. 885) preached to the southern Slavs. St. Adalbert (d. 997) was the chosen vessel of Christ to the northern Slavs. By 1015 A.D., St. Vladimir had made Kiev "the God-protected mother of Russian cities."

The spirit of these towering Apostles of Nations is summed up well by St. Boniface:

"The Church which sails through the sea of the world as a great ship should not be abandoned in the storms of temptation, but sailed right through them."

The Church was the vehicle not only of Faith, but also of reason and learning. The orders of Charlemagne to the Frankish bishops are typical:

"Let there be schools to teach the children to read. Let the psalms and their tunes, singing, computation, and grammar be taught in every bishopric and monastery. Let them have carefully corrected books."

Charlemagne could order schools only because he was the son of a Church that could run them.

Above all, the light of the Faith burned in the darkness of the violent world. As in all ages to come, man did not live by bread alone.

"Hunger and thirst, O Christ, for sight of Thee
 Came between me and all the fears of earth.
 Give Thou, Thyself the Bread, Thyself the Wine,
 Thou, sole provision for the unknown way.
 Long hunger wasted the world wanderer
 With sight of Thee may he be satisfied." (St. Radbod of Utrecht, d.919)

Pope St. Gregory — A Light in the Dark Ages

By FATHER THOMAS McMANUS
 "Behold the shades of night withdraw.
 The dawning day gleams forth
 Strength for all their daily tasks
 Beseech the men of earth,
 That God the Merciful relieve our strife,
 And with a father's love one day,
 To Heaven's Kingdom lead us." (Hymn for Lauds of Sunday, Liturgy of the Hours)

Tradition assigns these verses to Pope St. Gregory the Great (540-605). His pontificate shines as light upon a mountain top in the midst of the Dark Ages. With a father's love he drew the West into the orbit of God's Kingdom.

Gregory was born of the last patrician family, the last glory of the Roman Empire. He was the third member of his family to be elected pope. His mother and two of his aunts were honored as saints in the Roman calendar.

After receiving an excellent education, Gregory rose in political circles to be chief magistrate of Rome. There was a strong strain of monasticism in his family, and Gregory himself entered a monastery at the age of 35. He would be the first monk to rise to the papacy. In 579 he was summoned from the cloister to undertake the delicate mission of legate to Constantinople.

Any hope of ending his days in monastic peace came to an end in the year 590 when he was "elected" pope.

"While he was preparing to run away and hide, he was seized and carried off to the Basilica

of St. Peter. There he was consecrated to the pontifical office, and presented to the city as



Pope St. Gregory the Great

Pope." (Gregory of Tours, History of the Franks)

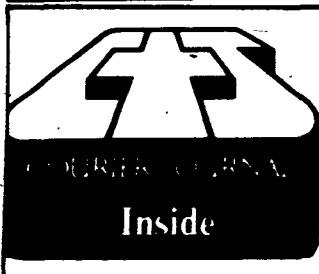
Gregory succeeded to the leadership of a city in chaos. For a century and a half Rome had been sacked repeatedly. Famine had become a chronic problem. Civil administration was wretched. Under Gregory Rome ceased to be the City of the Caesars and became forever after the City of the Popes.

He cultivated good relations with the Lombard invaders in Northern Italy, the Franks in France, and the Visigoths in Spain. He spent vast sums on ransoming captives and on public relief all over Italy. Gregory infused even such complex and mundane efforts with a spiritual sublimity.

"When we administer necessities to the needy, we give them what is their own, not what is ours. We pay a debt of justice, rather than do a work of mercy." (St. Gregory, Pastoral Care)

Gregory had considerable influence on the development of the western liturgy, streamlining and standardizing ceremonies and music. He is the first of the great missionary popes. His most famous mission was that of St. Augustine to England: "Go, and make angels of Angles."

Gregory ranks as one of the Doctors of the West for his writings and sermons on pastoral care. When he died in 604, Gregory truly was, as he always signed himself, "Servant of the servants of God."



Calendar	19	NFP Coordinators	15
Child	11	Opinion	18
Classified	19	People and Events	9
Cuddy	6	Pope	16
Editorial	18	RapAround	12,13
Holiday Events	7	Reedy	17
Liturgy	10	Southern Tier	10

Church-State Rift Shows in Haitian Case. 15

Sisters M Deegan at congregat

Ro Co

The R Mercy, a munity w the area years, w 150th anr Irish fou group D Motherho Road.

The founded Hig Qua Obs

Washir U.S. Supr that juric are under that the r obscene "doubt."

The st high cour 6-3 ruling the state volving (they so choice is state la constituti insisted, (a standar

The ap brought l officials imposed reasonable proof on involving local thea

Applyi jury com 17 were reasonab were no unable to the other Follow

COU Bishop

Ant Ge Car

Rev. Ep

Vol. 98 N

Courier Published after Jul Christmas Press Ass Single cop U.S. \$10 Offices: Rochester Second Rochester