

Christianity: A Cracked Vase

Our Catholic Heritage

Reform Movements Differ With the Church

By MSGR. JAMES F. CONNELLY

The cry for reform of the Church in its head and members reached a startling crescendo in the 16th century. Two major reform movements appeared. One operated outside the Catholic Church and gave birth to the Protestant Reformation. Perhaps, the ecumenical movement of our age is an attempt to reconcile these two reform movements.

By the beginning of the 1500s, Renaissance Catholicism resembled a large vase, as one German historian has described it, already shattered but with its pieces still in place. It was Father Martin Luther's destiny to touch that vase and almost shatter it.

Martin Luther (1483-1546), an Augustinian priest, gained his spot in history when he posted his famous "Ninety-five Theses" on the chapel door of the University of Wittenberg on Halloween, 1517. While his

initial theological opinions were not directly contrary to the dogma of the Church, they contained veiled denials of the traditional teaching on indulgences, of the authority of the papacy, and of the sacramental power of Holy Orders.

Luther moved steadily away from the Church. He asked the German nobles to set up a church independent of Rome; to ignore canon law; to abolish clerical celibacy; and to eliminate Masses for the dead. He denied transubstantiation and the sacrificial character of the Mass. He demanded that Holy Communion be administered under both species, and he retained but two Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In Luther's theology, every person was his own priest; and each person could interpret the Bible as he saw fit. One is saved by faith alone in Jesus Christ, and God predestines for all eternity those who are to be saved and those who are to be damned.

"Others," said Luther, "have attacked the life (of Peter's bark); I attack the doctrine."

Luther left the Church. The Augustinian monk had "excommunicated" the pope, before Pope Leo X (1513-1521) could excommunicate him. Before he died, however, Luther had lost control of the Evangelical Church (Lutheran) to the apostate German nobels.

All of the other Protestant reformers held more or less the same theology as Luther. Zwingli (d. 1531), the least successful of them, died before the reform movement was absorbed by Calvin's (d. 1564) reformed church in Geneva, Switzerland (Presbyterians).

John Calvin, the most ascetic of the Protestant reformers, differed from Luther's theology on three issues: 1) he denied the real presence of Christ in Holy Communion; 2) he emphasized the awful doctrine of absolute predestination; 3) he believed that his church should govern all political, religious, moral, social and civic affairs.

In England, Henry VIII (d. 1547) retained all the teachings of the Catholic Church except that of papal supremacy over the universal church. Henry VIII made himself the Supreme Head of the Anglican Church. What began as a schism became a heresy under the boy-king, Edward VI (d. 1553), and under Elizabeth I (d. 1603).

The major denominations of the Protestant Reformation were the Evangelical Reformed Church of Germany (Lutherans); the Reformed Church of Geneva (Presbyterians); the Anglicans; and the splinter groups such as the Baptists, the Anabaptists and the Mennonites; and more were to follow, such as the Unitarians and the Congregationalists. Indeed, the vase of Christianity had cracked.

St. Ignatius of Loyola Finds the Society of Jesus

By MSGR. JAMES F. CONNELLY

Ignatius Loyola, the youngest of 11 children, was born in 1491 to an illustrious family in the Basque region of Spain. He was trained as a soldier but his military career came to an abrupt end when his leg was shattered in the battle of Pamplona.

While he was recuperating from his wound, he was desperate for something to read to wile away the hours. "The Life of Christ" and some lives of the saints were all that were available. He became so inspired by them that he decided to become a soldier for Christ and His Church. In a dream the Blessed Mother persuaded him to go to a cave near Manresa. Nearby was the shrine of Our Lady of Montserrat. There he remained for one year of prayer and penance, and he began to jot down his meditations which he later published in his celebrated book, "The Spiritual Exercises."

He gave up all his possessions and as a poor pilgrim finally realized his dream of visiting the Holy Land in 1523. The next year he returned to Spain, resolved "to study as a means of helping himself work for souls."

Five years later he was at the University of Paris, a 31 year old scholar, living in abject poverty, begging for his meals, his lodging and his tuition. He soon attracted followers who admired his asceticism. By 1534, six theological students, including Francis Xavier, associated themselves with Ignatius. They called themselves the Company of Jesus.



St. Ignatius of Loyola

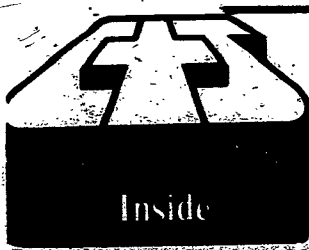
In 1540, Pope Paul III (1534-1549) formally approved the band as the Clerks Regular of the Society of Jesus. (The term Jesuit was never used by St. Ignatius; Calvin and others began to use that name as a term of derision in 1544).

The members of the Society of Jesus took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and a fourth vow "to serve the Roman Pontiff as God's vicar on earth," and "to execute immediately and without hesitation or excuse all that the reigning Pope or his successors may enjoin upon them for the benefit of souls or for the propagation of the faith."

By the time of St. Ignatius' death in 1556, there were 100 Jesuit colleges and 1,000 members of the Society. Those first Jesuits were the "shock troops" of the Church during the Reformation period. They were confessors to the influential, theologians, educators and intrepid missionaries.

Their education, diplomacy, devotion and discipline turned back the tide of the Protestant Reformation and recaptured much of Germany, Hungary, Bohemia and all of Poland for the Church. Rarely has so small a group accomplished so much for the Church. "Year by year," one scholar wrote, "its (Society of Jesus) prestige and influence grew, until, within 20 years of its formal establishment it was recognized as the most brilliant product of the Catholic Reformation."

St. Ignatius Loyola was canonized in 1622 in reflection of his motto, ad majorem Dei gloriam, "For the greater glory of God."



Calendar	12	Opinion	13
Child	8	Parish News	9
Classified	15	People and Events ...	7
Caddy	14	Pope	15
Deaths	14	RapAround	10,11
Editorial	13	Shannon	12
Liturgy	13		

Permanent Diaconate Candidates Reach Milestones 5