

COLUMNISTS

'Old-money families' played papal roles

People have always been fascinated with the rich and famous, which most of us are not. We wonder what it must be like to have more money than you can count, to buy whatever you want, to travel wherever you wish to go and to party with others of the same status without paying heed to the cost.

Of course, those with money have their own internal pecking order. They distinguish between new money and old money. Old-money people tend to look down upon new-money people.

One thinks, for example, of the great, old-money families of Italy: the Colonna, Barberini, Orsini, Borghese, de' Medici and Farnese. Their legacies are rich in art and architecture. What they also have in common are family trees that include at least one pope.

A story in the Dec. 27, 1996, edition of *The New York Times* focuses on one such noble family, the Pamphilis. The *Times* describes them as "one of the most august of Rome's princely lineages."

A few weeks ago the Pamphilis threw a party for 600 people in honor of Prince Rainier III of Monaco at the Palazzo Doria Pamphili in Rome. The bill, however, was covered by Fendi, the Italian fashion house — which also paid the Pamphilis a fee for using the palace.

Such are the choices faced these days, so says the *Times*, by old-money Italian families like the Pamphilis who still own palaces in Rome and Genoa, sev-



essays in theology

By FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

eral large country estates and one of the most important private collections in Europe, with works by Caravaggio, Titian, and Raphael, and a portrait by Velasquez of Pope Innocent X, the family's 17th-century papal relative.

Unfortunately, the *Times* said no more about this relative other than that a famous portrait of him exists and that he was once a pope. What sort of pope? Did he make any lasting historical mark? The *Times* doesn't tell us.

Even if one could lay a hand on a list of the more than 260 popes, it wouldn't be of much help. Such lists are like telephone directories — names, addresses and numbers, but nothing to distinguish one from another.

Innocent X was born in Rome on May 7, 1574. He was baptized Giovanni Battista Pamphili (also spelled Pamphili). After service in the Roman Curia and as papal nuncio to Naples (still a separate kingdom) and then to Spain,

he was named a cardinal in 1627. He was elected pope on Sept. 15, 1644, after a conclave that lasted 37 days because of the tremendous August heat and because several of the cardinals were suffering from malaria.

They eventually elected Cardinal Pamphili because, as in so many other instances throughout papal history, they wanted a pope different from the one who had just died — in this case, Urban VIII, a member of another prominent Roman family, the Barberini.

The cardinals resented Urban for his having flagrantly enriched and advanced his relatives during his own term of office. He had named his brother and two of his nephews cardinals, and depleted the papal treasury with his extravagances. When Urban VIII died, the Roman people broke into riotous jubilation upon hearing the news.

The new pope, Innocent X, was already 70 years old when elected. He immediately appointed a commission to investigate the wealth and possessions of the Barberini family, but Cardinal Mazarin, the powerful French minister, took the family under his personal protection and induced the pope to pardon them.

Innocent X himself was not infected with the bug of nepotism, but he had a different sort of problem. Throughout his pontificate he was essentially under

the thumb of his ambitious and greedy sister-in-law, Donna Olimpia Maidalchini. He did nothing, in fact, without consulting her. One can only imagine the resentment against her.

The Thirty Years War ended during Innocent X's reign. He issued a condemnation of Jansenism, a pessimistic religious movement then prevalent in France, but also wrongheadedly refused permission to missionaries in China to use Chinese rituals — with disastrous long-term consequences for the fortunes of Catholicism in that great land.

During Innocent X's pontificate, the interior decoration of the newly consecrated Saint Peter's Basilica was completed, the Piazza Navona was restored and adorned with its famous fountains, and the Villa Doria Pamphili (prominent in the *Times* story) was erected at the Porto San Pancrazio.

After Innocent X died on Jan. 1, 1655, his body remained in the sacristy for a few days because his sister-in-law refused to pay the funeral expenses. He was eventually buried in Saint Peter's, but with simple ceremonies.

More simple, to be sure, than the recent party for Prince Rainier at the Pamphili palace in Rome, where it is likely that the name of Donna Olimpia Maidalchini was never mentioned.

Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

Respond to God's call by doin' somethin'

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mark 1:14-20. (R1) Jonah 3:1-5, 10. (R2) 1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

The key word in next Sunday's readings is "call." To get a call from someone important to do something important elates us, doesn't it? Yet God is always calling us.

God calls Assyria, Israel's ancient enemy, to repentance (R1). In the Gospel, God issues two calls. First, a call to all to reform their lives and believe in the good news. Then a special call to four fishermen, Simon, Andrew, James and John, to follow him and become fishers of men.

The focus, however, is not so much on the call as on the response to the call. Some respond, some do not. The most unlikely, like the Ninevites, respond; the most likely, like the chosen people, do not respond.

The Jonah parable is a beautiful story. The point of the parable was to teach that God wills the salvation of all people, even people as evil, cruel and hated by all as were the Assyrians.

Historically, God never sent a prophet to a pagan nation. But as Jesus tried to shock Israel out of their smugness by making a Samaritan, so hated by the Jews, the hero of the parable of the Good Samaritan, so in the Jonah story, God tried to jar Israel out of her complacent exclusivism, thinking that salvation was hers alone, by offering salva-



a word for sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

tion to the Ninevites.

The Jonah parable is a humorous story, full of irony and satire. The only historical thing about it is the name of the prophet Jonah. Jonah lived in the eighth century B.C.; the parable was written sometime between the end of the Exile, 538 B.C., and 400 B.C.

When the Jews returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile, they found that pagans had settled in the land and had intermarried with the Jews left there to the detriment of their religion. Nehemiah, the leader of those returning from exile, sought to break up these mixed marriages. This cleansing movement bred the idea that God was their God only and had no interest in other peoples. To correct such a notion, the response says, "Good and upright is the Lord; thus he shows sinners the way." The Jonah parable was meant to teach the same lesson.

The story is humorous. Jonah didn't

want to do what God had told him. He ran away, as far as he could from Nineveh, to Tarshish — often identified as Spain. God then works one miracle after another to get Jonah back to Nineveh to do what he was told. Finally, he does. The Ninevites convert. Horrors! Jonah pouts. God had been merciful to Jonah, saved him from drowning, forgave his disobedience. Satirically, the mercy he has received he would deny to others.

The Gospel shows Jesus, a greater than Jonah, preaching the "good news." "Believe in the good news," he proclaims. The good news that God is a God of all, that he wills not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live, that he comes not to condemn the world, but to save it.

The pagans thought of God as a God of threats, not promises; a demanding God, not one ready to give more than to take. The good news is that such ideas are all wrong, that God is a Father, one loving us so much that he invites us to be his friends.

To such a call our response should be to reform our lives. To get rid of bad habits: swearing, excessive drinking, premarital sex, masturbation, gossiping, unkindness, meanness, impatience with others and so on.

Once a preacher gave a sermon on quitting. Afterwards, he asked a woman what she planned on quitting. She answered, "I ain't been doin' nothin' and

I'm goin' to quit that too."

Most of us, like that woman, could quit doin' nothin' and get involved in doin' somethin'. For instance, stop neglecting Mass — go once or twice during the week; stop skipping confession — go at least monthly; stop forgetting to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, to pray the rosary daily.

In other words, stop doin' nothin' and start doing somethin'.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, January 27
Hebrews 9:15, 24-28;
Mark 3:22-30

Tuesday, January 28
Hebrews 10:1-10;
Mark 3:31-35

Wednesday, January 29
Hebrews 10:11-18;
Mark 4:1-20

Thursday, January 30
Hebrews 10:19-25;
Mark 4:21-25

Friday, January 31
Hebrews 10:32-39;
Mark 4:26-34

Saturday, February 1
Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19;
Mark 4:35-41

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