



## The Authority of the Catholic Church

by Father Arthur Tonne

Over one hundred years ago in the town of Littlemore not far from Oxford, England, two Anglican ministers were talking. Ambrose St. John is speaking to John Henry Newman: "I may as well tell you frankly, Dr. Newman, I am going to follow in Dalgairn's steps."

"Then," said Newman, "you also will become a Catholic. Are you convinced that the Catholic Church is the true Church?"

"Yes, I am," answered his friend.

"By the time you return," Newman went on, "I hope my mind will be made up."

With feeling and deep emotion the brilliant leader of the Oxford Movement made clear that conversion to Rome would be tearing his life up by the roots.

Ambrose argued: "I know, sir, but if your heart is convinced?"

Newman nodded: "the writing of my essay has brought me nearly total conversion."

"And it is your essay that turned me," admitted Ambrose. "It's all so clear. Your whole work, tracing the development of Christian doctrine, boils down, in the end, to the truth of three points: the authority of the Roman Church, the divine origin of its unity, and its claim to apostolic succession from St. Peter to the present."

The essay in question was Newman's searching study: "The Development of Christian Doctrine." Ambrose St. John, his dearest friend, had read and corrected the manuscript.

"It converted me," insisted St. John, "I don't see why you, its author, should hesitate."

And not for long did the author hesitate. In 1845 John Henry Newman, the most brilliant intellect of recent centuries, the keenest thinker and clearest writer of many a day, entered the Catholic Church. He was convinced by the authority of the Church...

From Jesus Christ Himself the Catholic Church has received its authority. That power is three-fold: to teach, to supply the sacraments, and to govern. Jesus gave His Apostles and their successors the authority to be teachers, priests, and pastors. Christ conferred the power to teach when He commanded: "Going, therefore, teach all nations." (St. Matthew 28:18). He gave the power of the priesthood when He commanded: "Do this for a commemoration of Me." (St. Luke 22:19). And He gave the power to govern when He told the leaders of His Church: "Feed My lambs; feed My sheep." (St. Matthew 26:19).

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## The Chi Rho of Constantine the Great

by Joan Carroll Cruz



*"Blessed be the Name of Jesus." The power of the holy Name of Our Lord was placed before the Emperor Constantine on the eve of a great battle. That image, represented by the Chi and Rho, became the symbol of victory not just for that ancient Emperor, but for the Universal Church. The Church has preserved this image - one can see it inscribed and emblazoned on all her artifacts.*

Born between the years 275 and 288, Constantine was the son of a Roman officer, Constantius, who later became Roman emperor, and St. Helena, who is credited with having found the True Cross.

After serving under Diocletian and later fighting with distinction under Galerius, Constantine was proclaimed Caesar by his troops after the death of his father, Constantius. In Rome, however, Maxentius, who is described as a tyrant and profligate, was also proclaimed Caesar. Five years later, when Maxentius threw down Constantine's statues and attempted to darken his name, Constantine realized that war with Maxentius was inevitable.

Although Constantine's army of between 25,000 and 100,000 men was inferior in number to that of Maxentius, whose army numbered almost 200,000, nevertheless Constantine and his army proudly marched toward Rome to do battle with his rival.

Sometime during the march Constantine had a vision which was recorded for us by both Lactantius and Eusebius. They report that Constantine saw in the sky a cross surrounded by a brilliant, fiery light. Inscribed clearly on the cross were the Latin words, "In Hoc Signo Vinces" which mean, "By this sign thou shalt conquer."

Deeply impressed by this vision, "Constantine had the standards of his soldiers altered to bear not only a cross, but also a monogram combining the Greek letter X and P, which represent the first and last letters of the name of Christ. It is believed this was the first time the letters were used as a symbol of Christ. It should be noted that the majority of the soldiers were pagans, as were many of those who carried the standards.

Strengthened by the vision and surrounded by the symbols of the Saviour, Constantine courageously marched to meet Maxentius and confronted him at the Milvian Bridge that spanned the Tiber River. Despite the inferior number of his troops, Constantine's army



soundly defeated Maxentius, who lost his life in the Tiber on the day of the battle, October 28, of the year 312.

The following year, in gratitude to the God of the Christians, the victor issued the Edict of Milan, in which he extended tolerance to the Christians and encouraged their activities. Previous to the edict Christians had suffered bloody persecution. Caesars that followed Constantine made Christianity the state religion.

In Rome, the monogram of Christ, an X and P, was placed in the hand of a statue of Constantine. The pedestal of this statue bore the inscription: "By the aid of this salutary token of strength I have freed my city from the yoke of tyranny and restored to the Roman Senate and the People the ancient splendor and glory."

It is believed that St. Helena embraced Christianity soon after the battle, having been influenced, no doubt, by her son's vision and its prophetic outcome.

For his part, Constantine resisted conversion and was baptized only when he felt the approach of death. After suffering from an undisclosed illness, he died in May of 337, wearing, it is said, the white robe of a neophyte. †

### THE AUTHORITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH *continued from page 1*

From the time of Christ, His Church has exercised those powers. The Apostles taught. They acted as priests, as "the dispensers of the mysteries of God." (1 Corinthians 4:1). They exercised the power of pastors by making laws and enforcing them. Surely, unless Christ had clearly given them these powers they would not have used them.

1. Christ gave authority to preach and teach. We could never know what Christ taught or what He wanted, unless someone with authority told us. As St. Paul wrote to the Romans, (10:13-15): "For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then are they to call upon Him in whom they have not believed? But how are they to believe Him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear, if no one preaches? And how are men to preach unless they

be sent?" Sending demands authority. The Catholic Church has that authority.

Remember the words of Christ to His Apostles:

All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth; going, therefore, teach ye all nations." (St. Matthew 28:18). "He who hears you, hears Me; and he who rejects you, rejects Me, and he who rejects Me, rejects Him Who sent Me." (St. Luke 10:16). And the Bible tells us how the Apostles obeyed: "But they went and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the preaching by the signs that followed." (St. Mark 16:20).

The same Church teaches today. Her ordinary method is through bishops and priests to preach, teach catechism, conduct missions and retreats and courses in theology. Her extraordinary method is through the Pope and councils. ...

[A Catholic school system is an example of how seriously the Church has taken this responsibility. Along with

knowledge of the world, children learn about the Creator of the world.]

2. To enlighten the mind is not enough. Man needs spiritual help. Christ gave His Church the means of spiritual strength, the sacraments. In the same sentence and breath Jesus told the Apostles to teach and - to baptize all men. He told them to forgive sins. At the Last Supper He commanded them to continue the Holy Sacrifice. The chosen twelve carried out these commands.
3. Jesus also gave His Church the power to govern. Every society must have rules and regulations and someone to plan its program. Imagine a society with 431 million members all over the world without a head, without laws, without the power to admit or expel. The Church has the right to make, explain, and enforce laws.

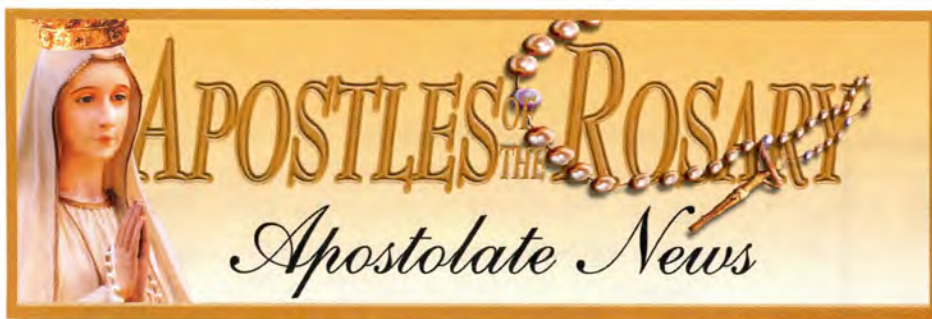
Some admit the power of the Church to teach and dispense the sacraments, but deny her power to govern.

Even the gang of boys in the empty lot reserve the right to admit or expel members, to make simple but binding regulations. Why deny that right to God's Church?

Christ gave authority to His Church and the Apostles used that authority. Their successors have used that authority.

This power and authority led Newman into the Church. No one ever became a Catholic with clearer mind and heart. No one ever studied and read more on the subject before joining. Yet his main reason for accepting the Catholic Church was her evident authority.

May his example strengthen you. May the consideration of the three-fold power of the Church strengthen you. Christ, as it were, has told His Church, "sit thou at My right hand until I make thy enemies the footstool of thy feet." Not by force but by knowledge and love may the Church in which we believe become a power to all men, leading them to her Founder. †



**F**ather Gruner has returned from the August 2007 conference (“The Only Way to World Peace”), held in Brazil.

There was definite enthusiasm from those who attended. No doubt part of their eagerness to attend came from the great assistance many of you lent us when you hand-wrote letters of invitation to bishops and priests.

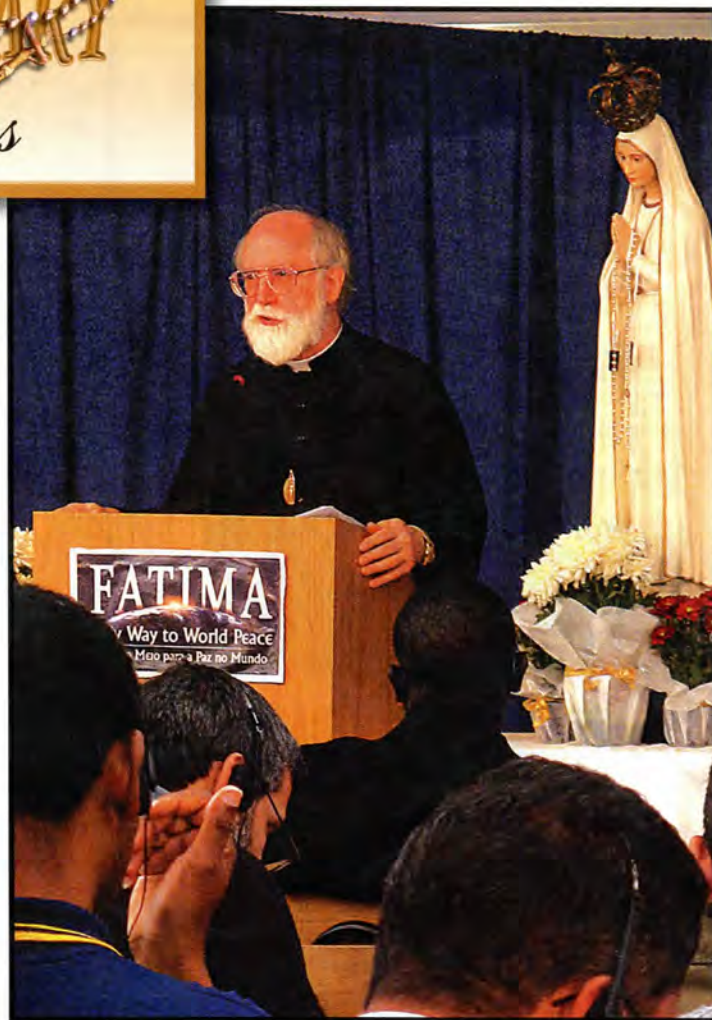


Many supporters of Our Lady’s apostolate took the time to write on Her behalf. This personal attention seemed to have some effect in conveying the urgency of the Fatima Message for this time. We thank you for the significant contribution you made to this worthy cause. Please continue to pray for the success of our next conference, to be held in India.

Please also remember in your prayers the Fatima Center staff, friends and volunteers. They, like you, have families and obligations. Some of our dearest have come down with various ailments which signal a withdrawal from active service. They will turn more to the contemplative life, and to joining you in prayers for Our Lady’s Apostolate.

As those around us wear less than would please Our Lord and Our Lady, let us be vigilant with our custody of the eyes, lest we be led to sin. As St. Francis de Sales says: “He who does not wish the enemy to force his way into the fortress must keep the gates closed!” †

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Father Gruner addresses a gathering during the recent *The Only Way to World Peace* Conference, held at Botucatu, Sao Paulo State, Brazil.

**We’d like to hear from YOU!  
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