

The Catholic Church is Apostolic

by Father Arthur Tonne

In the life of Queen Elizabeth I of England, who has been falsely called Good Queen Bess, we read the following story. While out on a hunting trip one day her party came upon a venerable old farmer working in his field. She soon discovered that the old gentleman was a fervent Catholic, faithful to the old religion. At once the Queen tried tactfully to win him over to the religion of her father, King Henry the Eighth.

The venerable farmer listened attentively and respectfully as she spoke, even nodding his head and smiling occasionally. And as she spoke he thoughtfully stroked his rather full and impressive beard. The Queen concluded by asking him, "Well, will you make up your mind to join us?" The old man slowly shook his head from side to side, grasped his beard firmly in his right hand and exclaimed: "How can I join a religion that is younger than my own gray beard?"

Truly, compared to the Catholic Church all other Christian sects are young. Not one of them goes back to the time of Christ. Well did that farmer know that his Church was 1500 years older than the Anglican or any other church. We too must



realize that the Catholic Church is the only one which goes back to the time of Christ. That is what we mean when we say the Catholic Church is apostolic: she holds the teachings and traditions of the Apostles; without a break she receives her orders and her mission from the Apostles. This is the fourth mark of the true Church.

The Catholic Church teaches what the Apostles taught. And the Apostles taught what Jesus taught. Only to the twelve did Jesus tell everything. Only to the twelve did He promise His abiding aid. Jealously, and with a sort of serene stubbornness, the Church has kept that teaching. One accusation of her enemies in every age is that she never changes. Thank God for that.

Call from the grave a Catholic who lived in the year 100, and another who lived about the year 200, and one from each succeeding century. Ask each one of them: "What did the Church teach in your day on this particular problem?" The answers would be identical, the very same. For the Catholic Church is ever the same.

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St. John Berchmans

(1599-1621)

Feast day: August 13

Patron of Young Men

In the century following the devastation begun by Martin Luther, God gave to the world a young man of devotion to, and enthusiasm for, the things of God. As one of the first Jesuits, this pure soul became a remedy for lukewarm hearts, and enkindled the minds of young people whose minds had been poisoned by the treacherous preachings of Protestantism.

John was born in 1599, the son of a shoemaker of Diest, Flanders. From his youngest days he was known as a cheerful and friendly boy. Above all, however, he was devout. From his seventh year he served two or three Masses before going to school at the abbey of Tongerlo.

During his school days he loved to act in the mystery plays so popular at the time, and was in general an excellent scholar. When his father suffered business losses and could no longer afford John's tuition, John was removed from school and placed as a servant in the house of a canon at Malines. While some may have found this situation most demoralizing, John found it a situation of great joy, for he had earlier resolved to become a priest. The indenture to the canon enabled him, simultaneously, to attend the seminary to begin his studies. God's Providence supplied for the material lack!

John often accompanied the canon on hunting trips and became quite expert in training dogs.

When the Jesuits opened a college at Malines, John was among the first to enroll, and after a year he entered their novitiate. From his notes as a novice it is apparent that he resolved to seek spiritual perfection by strictly observing little things and to become a saint while young. "If I do not become a saint while still young," he once said, "I shall never be one."

Soon after his novitiate, John's mother died – he wrote her a most touching letter during her last illness – and his father was ordained a priest after eighteen months of study. However, he died the day before John's profession. With a companion, John walked from Antwerp to Rome to take up further studies. His spiritual director, Father Masucci, said of him: "After Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga,

I have never known a young man of purer conscience or of greater perfection than John. His brethren loved and revered him as an angel from Heaven." The saint was particularly careful to avoid excesses or singularity in his piety, saying: "My penance is to live the common life. I like letting myself be ruled like a day-old baby."

In the summer of 1621 John was selected to defend a thesis in public debate, but the weather was so hot that John fell ill from the strain. During his illness, which baffled the physicians, he was always cheerful. When asked whether he had anything on his conscience, he replied: "Nothing at all." In fact, all his confessors declared that he had never committed a deliberate sin in his life. He lingered for two days and then died peacefully. He was twenty-two years old. His devotion spread rapidly, especially among young people.

Although the details of his life are sketchy here, one can yet gain some insight to his character, which did not tremble before apparent obstacles to his goals, but always trusted in the Divine Providence. He, like St. Thérèse who came several centuries after him, endeavored to find his sanctification in doing little things well, especially under obedience. He directed all his energies to serving Almighty God, and found that he had great energy to serve him. His purity of intention gave him a cheerful heart – wholehearted service to God is joyful service. His example was a bright beacon to guide young hearts tossed on the waves of the errors of the day. †





We thank you for your prayers and financial support of our most recent international conference “The Only Way to World Peace,” held in Brazil this past August.

Although Brazil has many glamorous tourist destinations, most of the people who live there do not lead glamorous lives.

There is little middle class; rather, there are the rich, and there are the poor. How poor? Imagine cardboard houses on the hillside, children in bare feet, running water a luxury. These images are not unusual for the priests who attended Our Lady’s conference. The priests not only confront this kind of poverty on a regular basis, but also respond to parish territories the size of dioceses in North America.

Satan’s attempts to thwart the success of Our Lady’s apostolate were apparent during the final few days before we departed to Sao Paulo, on our way to Botucatu, Brazil.

But those who attended the week-long conference found it an extraordinary experience. Even some so-called “liberation theologians” who had come to the conference with a less holy agenda found themselves transfixed by the Message of Fatima. ‘I have to rethink everything in light of Fatima,’ one of them told a Fatima Center worker.

Many of the priests had never heard the entire series of events of the Fatima apparitions of Our Lady and Her revelations to the three children. They were moved by the humble response of the three children and their fervent desire to make reparations for the sins of others.

Some of the priests, uplifted by the example set

by these three children, spoke of renewing through Our Lady their own efforts to be holy and perfected in Christ. At the close of the conference, just preceding the procession to the diocesan Cathedral, attending priests were given the opportunity to come to the microphone. Again and again they thanked everyone from the Fatima Center for providing this great opportunity to serve Our Lady. They were especially grateful to the donors (like yourself) who provided their sponsorships.

Although we had shipped, ahead of time, many cartons of sacramentals and literature to provide to the priests at the conference, they were not cleared through customs until after the end of the conference. This was, of course, a great disappointment to us. But the silver lining is in the challenge: the South American priests requested another 165,000 Brown Scapulars — that is, over and above the 7,000 we were able to provide them.

One of our staff has remained in Brazil to follow up with the distribution of these materials. He will



During *The Only Way to World Peace* conference in Brazil, Father Nicholas Gruner celebrated his 31st anniversary of Ordination.

be doing a lot of mailing over the next few weeks, to be sure that these materials (printed in both Spanish and Portuguese) reach all those priests who requested them for their parishioners.

We are so rich in things here in the United States and Canada that we do not always understand how meaningful a single holy card can be to those who live more humbly than we do. Let us ask the holy helper to see to the successful distribution of these important spiritual aids. For this honor to our heavenly Queen and for the salvation of souls: Saint Anthony Guide. †

The Catholic Church teaches exactly what the Apostles taught, not only by means of the Bible, but also by means of tradition. Tradition means a truth given by Almighty God and handed down in some other way than by the Bible. It is handed down by word of mouth, as from father to son, from teacher to taught. Or, it may be handed down in writing, as in the Fathers and Doctors of the Church and religious writers of every century.

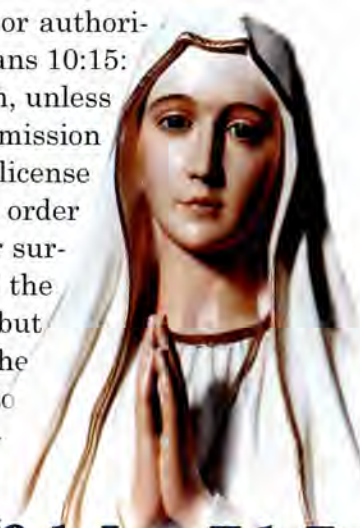
The keeping of Sunday is a good example of tradition. The Bible says absolutely nothing about Sunday. It does speak of the Sabbath, but Sabbath means Saturday, the last day of the week. The early Catholic Church changed the Lord's day from Saturday to Sunday, because Our Lord rose from the grave on a Sunday, and sent the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles on a Sunday. This idea has come down to us by spoken and written tradition, and is a convincing answer to the assertion: "I believe and do nothing unless it is in the Bible."

In another way the Catholic Church is apostolic, namely, in the unbroken line of shepherds from the popes through the bishops on to the most recently ordained priest. Never was the line broken. The present Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, is the 267th successor to the first Pope, St. Peter himself.

From the Apostles the Catholic Church also receives her orders, that is, her power of priesthood and ministry. Christ chose His ministers personally. "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." (St. John 15:16). He appointed the Apostles, and the Apostles only, to be the chief shepherds, rulers and ministers of His Church. To them Christ gave the sacrament of Holy Orders, which they in turn were to give to others. They received the power to baptize. "Teach ye all nations, baptizing them" (St. Matthew 28:19). They received the power to forgive sins. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." (St. John 20:23). They received the power to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. "Do this for a commemoration of Me." (St. Luke 22:19). These powers the Apostles handed down through an unbroken line of pastors. "They ordained to them priests in every church." (Acts 14:22).

From the Apostles the Church also receives her mission. By that we mean Christ gave His Church power to preach and teach. Only the Church can give men today the power to preach and teach.

We call it jurisdiction or authority. As we read in Romans 10:15: "How shall they preach, unless they be sent?" This mission is something like the license a doctor must have in order to practice medicine or surgery. He may have all the training necessary, but the State reserves the right to permit him to practice. The Catholic priest, in contrast to the non-Catholic minister, is sent to a **"Only I can Help You"** parish. Christ sent the Apostles, who also sent others. And the Church Christ founded still sends.



Our Church is truly apostolic, apostolic in her teaching, apostolic in her tradition or living voice, apostolic in her line of pastors, apostolic in her orders or ministry, and apostolic in her mission. The Catholic Church alone has this mark, just as she alone has the other three marks of the true Church. Only she is one, holy, Catholic and apostolic.

Should any other claim to be older, we can hear the Master of the house saying in words like those of the parable told in the Gospel of the 16th Sunday after Pentecost: 'Presumptuous guest, please go to a lower place. Make room for this Church. She is more distinguished, she is more ancient, she is Christ's Church.'

Thank God for belonging to His true Church, and beg Him to grant all men the joy and security of belonging to the one true fold. Amen. †

We'd like to hear from YOU!

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