



Newsletter

"Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation"

-CCC § 1816

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Happy New Year!

Today, from my heart, I wish everyone of you a Happy New Year. I wish it to all of you so sincerely that we would like to tell you how to make it a really happy New Year.

The Old Year has passed away. The year was fleeting, it seems as it was there one moment and then disappeared into a New Year; into an unknown future. It is only our religion, which can explain the flight of life; only our religious faith can give meaning to the passing of time; and only our religious belief can make the New Year a truly happy one.

Today, we realize that we have finished another year and greet the first day of 2007. Looking back, we see many sorrows and joys, we see many pains and pleasures, we see many graces and blessings, and we also see many sins. As far as time is concerned, these things have passed. Yet their results endure. From the sorrows we should have received a new appreciation of our faith. Our joys should have raised our thoughts to Him who gives us joy. Our pains should have also raised our thoughts, as do our pleasures, to the One who permits the pains and bestows the pleasures. The many graces and blessings, which we have received in the past year, are a cause of gratitude to us. And the sins, the failures, the disobedience to God's law, are a source of sorrow and regret to us. As a result we owe God a two-fold duty with regard to the past year:

First is a duty of reparation, that is, of begging pardon and making good for the disobedience and sins we have committed.

Our second duty is one of gratitude to Him for the blessings and favors, especially the spiritual favors, which we have received.

As we see life speed past us this New Year's Day, and enter 2007, our eyes are wide open, our minds keenly alert, to see where life is leading. Yes, the hand of God has bestowed another gift of time upon us. Minutes, hours and days are placed in our hands this morning. We do not know whether we will be able to enjoy this gift entirely. In other words, we don't know whether we will live through the coming year. Tens of thousands pass away every day, and since last midnight thousands have died. We see the beginning of this year, but we know not whether we shall see the end.

But we do know that this New Year will have no meaning unless it is lived according to the plan of God. Let me outline that plan, emphasizing things, which are commonplace yet so commonly forgotten:

Every day of this New Year we will think of God, we will pray. However brief that prayer, it will nevertheless be fervent and heartfelt.

Every Saturday or Sunday we will attend Holy Mass, punctually, thoughtfully, lovingly.

Frequently and fervently we will receive into our hearts the very Lord who gave us another calendar of life.

A happy New Year demands that we grow, not only physically, not only in age, but also in grace and in the knowledge of our faith. This means that we will study the Word of God.

This year will be happy if we make others happy. This we can do by charity in the way of material things and also in the way of kind thoughts and words and deeds.

Bringing spiritual happiness to others will increase our own joy. Praying for others, sacrificing for others, bringing others to a fervent belief in God, will make these days happy days.

Today we ask ourselves: where does life come from and where does it go? Only our faith in God can give meaning to what has gone before, and what will come. May that faith make the days that come happy days for everyone of you, happy in the knowledge and worship of God.

Ancient New Years

The celebration of the new year is the oldest of all holidays. It was first observed in ancient Babylon about 4000 years ago. In the years around 2000 BC, the Babylonian New Year began with the first New Moon (actually the first visible crescent) after the Vernal Equinox (first day of spring).

The beginning of spring is a logical time to start a new year. After all, it is the season of rebirth, of planting new crops, and of blossoming. January 1, on the other hand, has no astronomical or agricultural significance. It is purely arbitrary.

The Babylonian New Year celebration lasted for eleven days. Each day had its own particular mode of celebration, but it is safe to say that modern New Year's Eve festivities pale in comparison.

The Romans continued to observe the New Year in late March, but various emperors continually tampered with their calendar so that the calendar soon became out of synchronization with the sun.

In order to set the calendar right, the Roman senate, in 153 BC, declared January 1 to be the beginning of the New Year. But tampering continued until Julius Caesar, in 46 BC, established what has come to be known as the Julian Calendar. It again established January 1 as the New Year. But in order to synchronize the calendar with the sun, Caesar had to let the previous year drag on for 445 days.

The Church's View of New Year Celebrations

Although in the first centuries AD the Romans continued celebrating the New Year, the early Catholic Church condemned the festivities as paganism. But as Christianity became more widespread, the early church began having its own religious observances concurrently with many of the pagan celebrations, and New Year's Day was no different. New Years is still observed as the Feast of Christ's Circumcision by some denominations.

During the Middle Ages, the Church remained opposed to celebrating New Years. January 1 has been celebrated as a holiday by Western nations for only about the past 400 years.

Society News

We are indebted to Nicole Landreneau, MJ, of Millermark Creations, who has not only designed the Society's website, but works hard to keep it current. We are constantly tasking her with updates and additions. Thank you, Nicole.

You can advertise your commitment to evangelization in style. We have made arrangements with two Catholic owned companies to provide a wide range of apparel for men, women, and children. T-shirts, sweatshirts, and embroidered ball caps, and dress shirts are now available for purchase.

Society business cards are also now available. The cards will tell your friends and acquaintances that you are an "Associate Member" of the Society and also advertise the Society's website address.

Victor R. Claveau, MJ, will be on Ave Maria Radio with Teresa Tameo on January 2, 2007 at 9 am Eastern time. The topic will be the introduction of the Pope John Paul II Society of Evangelists.

Lay Witness Magazine, published by Catholics United for the Faith (CUF), is dedicating their March 2007 issue to the subject of evangelization and will feature the Society. Subscribe now, and get the March issue delivered to your home or office. CUF also allowed the Society to use their materials in a number of the free pamphlets that we offer.

Harmony Media, the foremost Catholic software company in the world, is now offering a 15% discount to Society members. Harmony Media offers *Welcome to the Catholic Church*, among many other fine computer programs. *Welcome to the Catholic Church* is the most comprehensive compendium of Catholic information available anywhere and is an extraordinary resource for anyone with a desire to learn about Catholicism. It covers Divine Revelation, Church Teaching, Mass, Sacraments, Church Organization, Prayer, Spirituality, Saints and Church History in depth. A free trial version is available at:

<http://www.harmonymedia.com/cdrom/welcome/welcome.htm>

The Society is continually adding to the number of pamphlets and will research and publish pamphlets on request. Recently, a Caribbean bishop requested pamphlets specifically focusing on Seventh-Day Adventism and the "Sabbath question". There are now a dozen pamphlets available on these topics.

Weekly homilies are available on thursdays, from Father Cletus Imo, a gifted Nigerian priest, which focus on the coming Sundays readings. Whether priest or lay person, these homilies can help one learn more about Scripture and prepare for Sunday Mass.

A pamphlet Rack was placed in San Secondo d'Asti church in Guasti, CA and the response has been extraordinary. Over 6,500 pamphlets were distributed in the first six weeks.

Our goal is that the School of Evangelization will be up and running before the end of 2007. While most evangelization programs focus on keeping Catholics Catholic, the school will focus on reaching out to fallen away Catholics and those without any religious affiliation. We all know how valuable converts to the Church can be, as they generally have an enthusiasm for the Church that many cradle Catholics take for granted.

The evangelization program has a 7% success record. In other words, 7% of the people contacted will either return to the Catholic Church or convert. The program has the potential of doubling the size of any parish within 18 months. It is simple, but effective.

Future goals are to establish chapters of the Society throughout the world. God willing, the Society's materials will be translated into the major world languages, including Spanish, French, German, Italian, Russian, Tagalog, and Arabic. We need translators; let us know if you can help.

Our Patron Saint

St. Anthony Mary Claret

St. Anthony was born on December 23, 1807, at Sallent, Catalonia, Spain and died in Cistercian monastery at Fontfroide in France, on October 24, 1870 at the age of 63. He was a Spanish missionary priest and bishop who became known as the "Spiritual Father of Cuba." He also founded the Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Claretians).

Extraordinary signs manifested Fr. Claret's holiness. Among these was the resplendent light that surrounded him while he celebrated Holy Mass. Father Paul Coma of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri declared, "When I was fifteen years of age, I entered the parish church of St. Eugenia of Bergo, diocese of Vich. At the "Rosary" altar, I noticed an unusual splendor surrounding the then unknown celebrant. I drew near and then recognized Father Claret, whose face was transformed. This strange brightness spread its rays as far as the sacristy."

Pope Pius XII on the day of St. Anthony Mary Claret's canonization stated: "A great soul born to unite contrasting elements, he was humble in origin, yet illustrious in the eyes of the world. Small in stature, but a giant in spirit. Modest in appearance, but very capable of instilling respect, also in the great ones of the earth. Strong in character, but with the gentleness of someone who knows the restraint of austerity and penance. Always in the presence of God, even in the midst of prodigious activity. Slandered and admired, celebrated and persecuted, and among such great marvels, a gentle light that illumines all, his devotion to the Mother of God."

St. Anthony was beatified in 1934 and by the time of his canonization in 1950, there were 4,000 Claretians living in 240 religious houses in 24 countries.

On December 8, 1869, seven hundred bishops from all over the world gathered in Rome for the First Vatican Council. St. Anthony Claret was one of the Council Fathers. His presence became noticeable when the subject of papal infallibility was discussed, which Claret defended vehemently. This teaching became a dogma of faith for all Catholics at this Council.

Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore came to know Archbishop Claret at the Council and said of him, "There goes a true saint." Pope Pius IX was of the same opinion: "Archbishop Claret is a man of God. He is a saint!"

St. Anthony was given an extraordinary grace from our Lord as he was known to be a living tabernacle: "On August 26, 1861, finding myself at prayer in the church of the Holy Rosary, at La Granja, at seven o'clock in the evening, the Lord granted me the grace of conserving the Sacramental Species within my heart." For the rest of his earthly days he shared with the Mother of God in a special way the divine privilege preserving incorruptibly from Communion to Communion the precious Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ in his breast. St. Anthony Mary Claret pray for us.

Evangelization tip of the Month

In September 1954 the St. Louis archdiocese launched its first Catholic Census and Information program, sending thousands of men, working in pairs, to call at every home. They were carefully chosen, trained for their work, and equipped with literature to be left as far as possible at every home. What were the results? The *St. Louis Register* summarizes them as follows:

"Some 1,100 converts came into the Church, 600 lapsed Catholics returned to the sacraments, and nearly 1,500 others responded to the invitation to take instructions by mail. When you consider the fact that multitudes of Catholics also took the opportunity to go to the Information Forums to review their catechism, the total result is that more than 10,000 in all benefited by

the campaign." So gratified was Cardinal Ritter with the results that he launched a Religious Information Program each succeeding year, with varying modifications and always to great fruitfulness.

In 1957 the St. Louis archdiocese concentrated its annual Religious Education Program on calling at homes to bring interested non-Catholics, lapsed Catholics and Catholics who felt the need for more instruction to parish Open Houses and Information Forums. They recruited a total attendance of 5,867 people, of whom 2,157 were non-Catholics and 3,710 were Catholics. The doorbell apostolate netted approximately 1,000 conversions, the reclamation of 289 lapsed Catholics and the validation of 219 marriages.

-*Third National Conference on Convert work* sponsored by the Paulist Institute. June 27-29, 1961.

Note: *The 7% Solution: A Guide to Evangelization at the Parish, Community, or Diocesan Level* (available in our Books section) outlines a program of evangelization, which can be implemented at the parish, community, or diocesan level. This program will produce extraordinary results, when implemented by dedicated, like-minded Catholics who trust in the Holy Spirit for direction. If you can envision an evangelized parish, community, or diocese, it can be accomplished. It is not a program for pessimists, or those who lack faith, it is a program designed to be implemented by creative men and woman who see obstacles as opportunities for personal and spiritual growth. There is nothing more rewarding than to share the message of the Gospel and lead others to the intimacy of receiving the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist.

Bishop Fulton J. Sheen

During the Tre Ore sermon which he preached on Good Friday some years ago, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen asked his audience: "If Jesus Christ thirsted for souls, must not a Christian also thirst? If He came to cast fire on the earth, must not a Christian be enkindled? Has he not called us to be His apostles and His ambassadors, in order that His Incarnation might be prolonged through the continued dispensation of the divine through the human?" He answered his own question by declaring that, "*A Catholic who does not strive to spread his Faith is a parasite on the life of the Church*" (*The Rainbow of Sorrow*, New York, P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1938, pp. 69-70).

Questions From Our Members

Why do Protestants number the Ten Commandments differently than we Catholics?

The Scriptures tell us that there were Ten Commandments, but do not indicate how they were divided. The Protestant division follows rather Ex. 20:2-27, while the Catholic follows Deut. 5:6-21. The Catholic division is older and more logical. We hold that desire for another man's wife and desire for another man's property are essentially two distinct crimes, and therefore, merit two separate commandments, the ninth and tenth. On the other hand, the first commandment insists on the virtue of religion and forbids all sins against that virtue, the chief of which is idolatry. Logically, therefore, the Protestant second commandment has no reason for being, and was born of the necessity of controversy to justify the early Reformers.

As Catholics, are we allowed to cremate and are we allowed to spread the ashes?

The new Code of Canon Law (1983) stipulates, "The Church earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burying the bodies of the dead be observed; it does not, however, forbid cremation unless it

has been chosen for reasons which are contrary to Christian teaching" (no. 1176, 3).

Therefore, a person may choose to be cremated if he has the right intention. However, the cremated remains must be treated with respect and should be interred in a grave or columbarium.

What is the "Secret of the Mass"?

As far back as the fourth century, historians called Christian life "the discipline of the secret." However, much earlier, before it was called anything at all, it was a deeply ingrained discipline that had life of death consequences.

Of the 249 years from the first persecution under Nero (64) to the year 313, when Constantine established lasting peace, it is calculated that the Christians suffered persecution about 129 years and enjoyed a certain degree of toleration about 120 years. There is no way to know for certain, but it has been estimated that as many as one million Christian men, women and children perished in martyrdom during this period.

It took a long time for people to believe that the persecutions were really over. There was a latent fear of renewal for many years. Secrecy survived in the East until the fifth century, in the West until the sixth. When partially trusted strangers or new converts attended Christian rites, they were allowed to remain for the first part of the prayers and ceremonies. They were required to leave before the Eucharistic celebration. The first part of the Mass was designated for "the catechumens" and the rest designated for "the faithful." The Eucharistic celebration was the most carefully guarded secret in all history. It was referred to as "the secret" until 1964 when Vatican Council II removed the label of secrecy and openly substituted "Liturgy of the Eucharist" for "Secret of the Mass."

Eucharist Denied

The first time in recorded history that we find a denial of the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist is in 1047 AD by Berengarius of Tours, France. St. Thomas Aquinas calls "Berengarius...the first deviser of this heresy," Berengarius taught that the consecrated Bread and Wine are only a "sign" of Christ Body and Blood. He argued with Church authorities until 1079 when he signed the following statement:

I, Berengarius, in my heart believe and with my lips confess that through the mystery of the sacred prayer and words of our Redeemer the bread and wine which are placed on the altar are *substantially changed into the true and proper living flesh and blood of Jesus Christ*, our Lord, and that *after consecration it is the true body of Christ* which was born of the Virgin and which, offered for the salvation of the world, was suspended on the Cross, and which sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and the true blood of Christ, which was poured out from His side not only through the sign and power of the sacrament, but in its property of nature and in truth of substance, as here briefly in a few words is contained and I have read and you understand. Thus I believe, nor will I teach contrary to this belief. So help me God and these holy Gospels of God.

Berengarius died in 1088 in the good graces of the Church.

The Oxford Movement

The Oxford, or Tractarian Movement began in 1833, when a number of Oxford professors tried to start a reform in the established Church of England. Edward Bouverie Pusey and John Henry Newman were the acknowledged leaders, and their "Tracts for the Times" soon held the attention of the whole country. The Tractarians drew their inspiration from the works of the ancient Fathers, and naturally this led them to Rome. Pusey and his

adherents would not hear of union with the Catholic Church, but Newman made a complete submission to Rome in 1845. His example was followed by a large number of distinguished people, such as Ward, Faber, Oakley, Manning, etc. Within a very few years the number of converts swelled to many thousands. –*Truth*, March 1927

Why I became Catholic

John Henry Cardinal Newman

John Henry was born in 1801. He is the most distinguished graduate of Oxford University. For twenty-four years he was a clergyman of the Church of England. In 1845 he became a Catholic

“From the time that I became a Catholic, of course I have no further history of my religious opinions to narrate. In saying this, I do not mean to say that my mind has been idle, or that I have given up thinking on theological subjects; but that I have had no changes to record, and have had no anxiety of heart whatever. I have been in perfect peace and contentment. I never have had one doubt.

From the day I became a Catholic to this day, now close upon thirty years, I have never had a moment’s misgiving that the communion of Rome is that Church which the Apostles set up at Pentecost, which alone has the adoption on the sons, and the glory, and the covenants, and the revealed law, and the service of God, and the Promises, and in which the Anglican communion, whatever its merits and demerits, whatever the great excellence of individuals in it, has, as such, no part. Never have I for a moment hesitated in my conviction, since 1845, that it was my clear duty to join the Catholic Church, as I did then join it, which in my own conscience I felt to be divine. Persons and places, incidents and circumstances of life, which belongs to my first forty-four years, are deeply lodged in my memory and my affections; moreover, I have had more to try and afflict me in various ways as a Catholic than as an Anglican; but never for a moment have I wished myself back; never have I ceased to thank my Maker for His mercy in enabling me to make the great change and never has He let me feel forsaken by Him in distress, or in any kind of religious trouble.

I have not had one moment’s wavering of trust in the Catholic Church ever since I was received into her fold. I hold, and have ever held, that her Sovereign Pontiff is the center of unity and the Vicar of Christ; and I ever have had, and have still, an unclouded faith in her creed and in all its articles; a supreme satisfaction in her worship, discipline, and teaching; and an eager longing, and a hope against hope, that the many dear friends whom I have left in Protestantism may be partakers of my happiness. ...Return to the Church of England! No! The net is broken and we are delivered. I should be a consummate fool (to use a mild term) if in my old age, I left the land flowing with milk and honey, for the city of confusion and the house of bondage.”

What they Really believe!

Mormon Baptism

“We are baptised for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16). We are also baptised to become members of the Church of Jesus Christ, and to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5).

“Through the ordinance of baptism, we make a promise, called a *covenant*, with God. We promise to accept Christ, to become His followers, and to keep His commandments to the end of our lives. In return, our Heavenly Father promises to forgive our sins and let us return to live with Him, provided we keep our covenants.”

From www.mormon.org. An official site of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Is Mormon Baptism valid?

On June 5, 2001, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith answered a dubium (question) on the validity of Mormon baptism. The question posed was: Whether the baptism conferred by the community, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” called “Mormons” in the vernacular, is valid. The Response was: Negative (AAS 93 [2001] p. 476).

See Pamphlets #064 and #146 for more in-depth information.

Gehenna

Gehenna is the name given to a valley near Jerusalem, where at one time sacrifice was offered to the pagan god, Molech. It was later used as a place for the cremation of bodies, a fire being kept burning all the time for this purpose. Because of the abominations which took place in the time of King Ahaz, every form of pollution later found its way into this valley, and the name of Gehenna, which originally meant the valley of a man called Hinnom, became a byword for a place of punishment for the wicked after death.

Prayer

Prayers is the most exalted function in which man can be engaged, because it exercises the highest faculties of the soul, –the intellect and the will; it brings us into direct communication with the greatest of all beings, –God himself; it is the channel of heaven’s choicest blessings; it excludes no one, it embraces all in the circle of its benedictions; it gives us access to our Heavenly Father at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. In a word, prayer renders us co-operators with our Creator in the moral government of the world, since many of the events of life are shaped in accordance with our pious entreaties. Conceive, then, the dignity of God’s saints. The affairs of life are decreed from all eternity; and the eternal decrees themselves are in a measure, regulated by the prayers of His servants. “Prayer moves the Hand that moves the universe.”

–James Cardinal Gibbons

The Death of Arius

About three hundred years after the time of Our Lord, Arius, a priest of Constantinople, began to teach that Jesus was not God. He gained many followers, but he and his heresy were condemned during the Council of Nicea in the year 325 AD. Later, however, the Emperor Constantine supported his cause and ordered the Bishop of Constantinople to restore him to the communion of the Church. The bishop was helpless, and could only beg God to avert such a scandal. God did not refuse his request.

When Arius with his followers came in joyful procession to the cathedral door, the heretic was suddenly seized with painful spasms, and having fled to a private room for relief, he remained so long that his friends went in search of him. They found him in a closet, livid and dead, the floor strewn with his blood and intestines. His body had burst asunder just like that of the traitor Judas.

* * *

May you always have work for your hands to do,
May your pockets hold always a coin or two,
May the sun shine bright on your windowpane,
May the rainbow be certain to follow each rain,
May the hand of a friend always be near you,
And may God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.