

# The FRIENDS of the HOLY FATHER

Newsletter no. 44

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On 8<sup>th</sup> July 2014 Pope Francis preached on the Beatitudes of Jesus



“ The Beatitudes are Jesus' portrait, his way of life, and they are the way of true happiness, which we also can live with the grace that Jesus gives us. As Moses stipulated regarding the Covenant with God in accordance with the law received on Sinai, so Jesus, from a hill on the shore of Lake Galilee, gives to his disciples and to the crowd a new teaching that begins with the Beatitudes.

Moses gave the Law on Sinai and Jesus, the new Moses, gives the Law on that hill, on the shore of Lake Galilee. The Beatitudes are the path that God indicates as an answer to the desire of happiness inherent in man, and perfects the Commandments of the Old Covenant”.

“We are used to learning the Ten Commandments - you certainly all know them, you learned them in catechism - but we are not used to repeating the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12). Let us try to recall them and to imprint them, in our hearts. Let's do this: I will say them one after the other and you will repeat them”.

“ Agreed? “

## PAPAL ANNIVERSARIES IN 2015

**115 - Pope Saint Alexander I was martyred** - the 6<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome reigned from AD106 in 115. Like all of the early popes, he is honored as a saint and a martyr. He was reportedly born in the area of Esquiline Hill, one of the Seven Hills of Rome. Acting singly or part of a collective leadership at Rome, he played an important part in the governance of the church and the evolution of its emerging liturgical and administrative tradition. The date of his death is given as May 3<sup>rd</sup> 115, during the reign of the Emperor Trajan, and he was buried on the Via Nomentana, where his execution had taken place. His remains are said to have been transferred to Freising in Bavaria, in 834

### 615 - Pope St Boniface IV's death



The son of a doctor from Valeria, Italy, he was a protégé of Pope Gregory the Great for whom he served as deacon and became papal treasurer in 591. He emulated the great Pope by also turning his home into a monastery. He was elected Pope in September 608 after Rome had suffered great pestilence, famine and flooding during which time many ancient buildings had been damaged. The great **Pantheon** however, built by Marcus Agrippa, remained intact. The coffered concrete dome, with a central opening to the sky, is still the world's largest unreinforced concrete dome.

Pope Boniface sent a request to the Emperor Phocas in Constantinople to see if he would donate the great pagan edifice to the Christian community in Rome to convert it to a Christian church. Phocas agreed as he wished to improve relations between Rome and

Byzantium. The Romans were grateful to him and erected a column to him in the Forum in 608 in front of the Rostra, a Corinthian column bearing at the top a bronze statue of the Emperor. It is still there, (left) minus the statue.



On 13<sup>th</sup> May 509 the Pantheon was consecrated as a Christian Church and dedicated to **Santa Maria ad Martyres**. "The Temple to all the gods "had metamorphosed into "The Temple to all the martyrs." Pope Boniface brought 28 cartloads of martyrs' bones from the Catacombs and had them deposited under the main altar of the new sanctuary. He held a synod in Rome to regulate monastic life. One of the bishops who attended this synod was **Mellitus the first Bishop of London** to whom he gave letters to Ethelbert the King of Kent. In 604 Mellitus joined St Augustine who had led Pope Gregory's mission to Kent in 597 and was

appointed the first Bishop of London. King Ethelbert erected a simple timber building on Ludgate Hill as the first church in the city. Mellitus brought from Rome a book known as *The St Augustine Gospels* from which an illustrated page is shown (right).



Boniface died on 8<sup>th</sup> May 615 and was buried in St. Peter's Basilica. His tomb today lies under the Altar of St. Thomas in the left transept of St. Peter's Basilica.

## 1215 - Pope Innocent III convoked the 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council



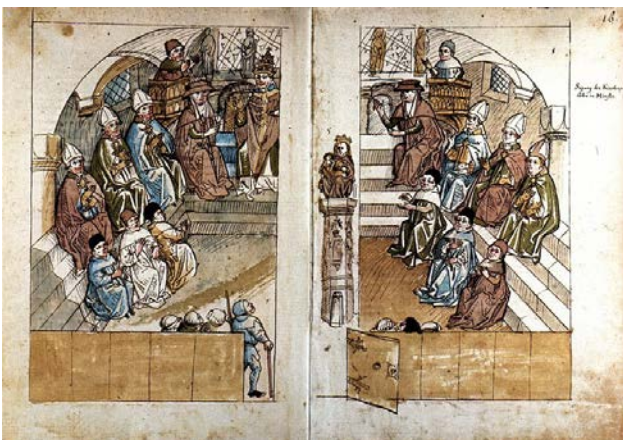
The Popes of the Middle Ages were the most powerful men in the world, none more so than Lothar de Segni, elected Pope in 1298 at the young age of 37, taking the name Innocent III. Innocent began by reforming his own household: he exchanged the gold and silver vessels then in use for glass and wood. He took his attendants from monastic orders rather than from noble families.

Pope Innocent had called the Fourth Crusade to liberate the Holy Land. The forces were conveyed by Venetian ships that, when they arrived at Constantinople in 1204, demanded payment that was not forthcoming. Instead of proceeding to the East they stormed the Byzantine imperial capital and sacked it with much slaughter of fellow Christians. The Holy Father was horrified by this disastrous outcome of his crusade.

In 1215 he convoked the 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council and steered the bishops of Europe to a new framework of pastoral care that would remain the

fundamental structure of Western Christianity until modern times. One decree promoted the dogma of transubstantiation; another required that every man and woman would receive Holy Communion at least once a year. All priests would be adequately educated to instruct the people properly. The Council also drew up a core curriculum covering all the fundamentals of the Faith.

## 1415 - Pope Gregory XII abdicated to end the Western Schism.



The Great Western Schism was the scandal that divided the Catholic Church, when rival popes sat in Rome, Avignon and elsewhere, that lasted for almost 40 years. The election of the Italian Pope Urban VI (a reaction to the French-dominated Avignon papacy) led to the election of a rival pope, the French Clement VII; the two sat respectively at Rome and Avignon. During this schism France, Scotland, Castile and Portugal recognized Clement VII; whereas England, Flanders, Hungary and the Holy Roman Empire supported Urban VI. In 1409 the Council of Pisa attempted to resolve this split but only produced a third rival pope.

Another council was called in 1414 - **the Council of Constance** (above) that finally resolved this seemingly intractable situation by deposing all three claimants to the papal throne.

Gregory XII, who was in the Roman line and who convened the Council, abdicated in 1415. John XXIII, who had been elected by the Council of Pisa in 1409; and Clement VIII the last of the pretenders to the Avignon papacy also stood down.

The Council was then free to elect a new Pope. Oddo Colonna, the cardinal-deacon of San Giorgio in Velabro, was unanimously elected pope taking the name **Martin V** after a three-day conclave at which 22 cardinals and 30 representatives of the five nations present at the council participated and voted. It was the last papal Conclave to include lay electors.

## 1515 - Pope Leo X creates Thomas Wolsey a cardinal.

Giovanni de Medici was elected Pope in 1513 and died in Rome in 1521. He disappointed the high hopes placed in him as by his love of luxury and entertainment he emptied the papal coffers within two years. He needed funds for a projected crusade against the Turks and the construction of St. Peter's and resorted to the selling of indulgences for this purpose. This became the occasion of Martin Luther's 95 theses at Wittenberg condemning this action and Leo promptly excommunicated him. He bestowed the title "Defender of the Faith" on King Henry VIII of England for writing a book defending the Papacy against Luther. Within the Church **Thomas Wolsey** became Archbishop of York, the second most important seat in England, and then was made a cardinal in 1515, giving him precedence even over the Archbishop of Canterbury. Wolsey's main legacy is his interest in architecture, in particular building his old home of Hampton Court Palace, which still stands today.

When Wolsey failed to secure the King's divorce from Katherine of Aragon his career was finished. Stripped of his office and his fine house at Hampton Court, appropriated by the King, he died on his way to prosecution in London in 1530.



## 1915 Pope Benedict XV (1914 – 1922) appealed for peace in WWI



Pope Benedict XV was elected in 1914 after the outbreak of the First World War the consequences of which were the main focus of his pontificate. He declared the neutrality of the Holy See and attempted from that perspective to mediate peace. In July 1915 he issued the Apostolic exhortation - **To the Peoples now at War and to their Rulers....**

*We turn a fearful glance on the blood-stained battlefields, felt the anguish of a father, who sees his homestead devastated and in ruins before the fury of the hurricane. And thinking with unspeakable regret of our young sons, who were being mown down by death in thousands, We opened Our heart ... to all the crushing sorrow of the mothers, and of the wives made widows before their time, and to all the inconsolable laments of the little ones, too early bereft of a father's care ... We implore you to put an end at last to this horrible slaughter, which for a whole year has dishonoured Europe. Nor let it be said that the immense conflict cannot be settled without the violence of war ... Blessed be he who will first raise the olive-branch, and hold out his right hand to the enemy with an offer of reasonable terms of peace ... We invite all, whosoever are the friends of peace the world over, to give Us a helping hand in order to hasten the termination of the war, which for a long year has changed Europe into one vast battlefield. May the peoples, bound in bonds of brotherly love, return to the peaceful rivalry of studies, of arts, of industries, and, with the empire of right reestablished, may they resolve from now henceforth to entrust the settlement of their differences, not to the sword's edge, but to reasons of equity and justice, pondered with due calm and deliberation. This will be their most splendid and glorious conquest!*

Given at Rome, from the Vatican, 28 July 1915.

Both sides rejected his initiatives. German Protestants rejected any "Papal Peace" as insulting. The French politician Georges Clemenceau regarded the Vatican initiative as being anti-French. The Pope's biographer John F Pollard said that Pope Benedict spent an "enormous amount of money: 82 million lire, and nearly bankrupted the Vatican" to feed European refugees, buy clothing, and relieve suffering. Perhaps the Pope's greatest wartime success came from the relocation of 26,000 POWs and 3,000 civilians to neutral Switzerland. The Germans conceded on one papal point: deported Belgians were allowed to return home.

## THE FRIENDS' PILGRIMAGE TO ROME AND ASSISI - SEPTEMBER 2014

It was a great privilege to have visited so many places, and seen relics associated with St. Francis and St Clare. Twenty-seven of us, including three priests, Mgr Daniel Hart, Fr William Wilby and our leader Fr Anthony Pellegrini, stayed first at **Rome** then went on to **Assisi**. Giordano Marra guided us to all our destinations faultlessly. In Rome we stayed at the Domus Internationalis Paulus VI, an ancient building rebuilt to accommodate bishops and clergy. It was here that Cardinal Bergoglio stayed before his election as Pope, and went there afterwards to pay his bill.

Our first day saw us at the Palazzo Palavicini, (right) the residence of H.E. Nigel Baker, Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Holy See, where we were received with a warm welcome by him and Stephen Townsend, the Deputy Head of Mission. We were treated to a very generous tea party prepared by Mrs. Baker. We then repaired to the open air rooftop covered hall that has the distinction of being the highest point in Rome with a direct view of St. Peter's. The British Embassy has collaborated with the Holy See on issues as varied as disarmament, human rights and climate change across the world from the Middle East and Africa to the Americas.



In the Embassy we saw a picture that illustrates the time when the Pope assisted the Allied cause against Napoleon. The mezzotint copy of James Northcote's painting of Pope Pius VI with three officers of the 12<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons (left). It shows Lieutenant General Robert Browne a distinguished officer who commanded King George III's 12<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Light Dragoons. In 1794, while still a major, he was stationed with the regiment near Rome. During this time he was received in audience by Pope Pius VI accompanied by fellow officers, Captain Head and Lieut. Pierce Butler. The Pope ceremoniously placed a Dragoon helmet on Browne's head expressing "his gratitude to the British nation, his earnest desire for its welfare" and concluding with a prayer that "truth and religion might triumph over injustice and infidelity". This was followed in the evening by dinner at the Polese restaurant when we had the pleasure of the company of the rectors of three Rome seminaries: Mgr. Ciarán O'Carroll, of the Irish College, Mgr Roderic Strange, of the Beda College and Mgr Philip Whitmore, of the Venerable English College.

The second day in Rome saw us at Mass in the Church of Santo Spirito in Sassia, followed by the Wednesday Papal Audience where we were seated in St Peter's Square in front of a vast crowd of countless thousands to pay our respects to the Supreme Pontiff. On those same steps outside the Old St Peter's the young Francis of Assisi, thinking of embracing "Lady Poverty", exchanged his clothes with a beggar and in these rags begged for alms. Next was a visit to the Lateran Basilica and Palace where St Francis with a few companions were received in 1209 by Pope Innocent III who at first rejected his request to approve the formation of a new Order to preach the Gospel in the simplicity of total poverty. At that time the Church was beset by many problems and after a dream the Pope recognized the importance of this new movement. He tonsured them and founded the Franciscan Order that soon expanded rapidly.

Nearby is the Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme that was founded by St Helena in the 4<sup>th</sup> century after she had discovered the relics of the True Cross in Jerusalem and brought them home to her palace. Cartloads of earth from Golgotha were also brought home with her to form the floor of her new Chapel to house the relics. There is a panel of glass in the floor through which this soil can be seen. To the right of the main entrance of the Basilica is the former Convent, then vacant, that Pope Pius IX gave to the newly ordained John Henry Newman as the first home for his Oratorians before they returned to England.



The next day we drove to **Assisi**. Just off the main square we arrived at the childhood home of St Francis. While his father, Pietro Bernadone, a merchant selling precious textiles in France in 1182, his son was born in Assisi. The child was baptized at once and given the name Giovanni by his mother, a lady from Provence, but when Pietro returned home he gave him the nickname Francesco, Frenchman, and the name stuck. There is a small prison there where Pietro, exasperated by the later behaviour of his son who had rejected the high life to become a beggar, locked him up until he saw sense. His mother set him free allowing him to follow his mission.



One Mass in Assisi was in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel in the Basilica of St Clare that had originally been the ancient Chapel of St George where St Francis and St Clare had been schooled in the Faith. Here is preserved the famous Crucifix that spoke to St. Francis "rebuild my Church".

The tiny Church of St Mary and the Angels, (right). dating from the 5<sup>th</sup> century, then owned by St Benedict, is located on a small plot of land

"**Porziuncula**", to the south of the city. Following the episode with the Crucifix in the **Church of San Damiano**, Francis carried stones from the town and rebuilt both ancient buildings. Later the Benedictines gave the Porziuncula to St Francis as a place to begin his mission and it has been the centre of the Franciscan movement ever since. It was later enclosed in the huge basilica we see today.



Looking west across the valley we saw **Perugia** in the distance. In 1202 Francis joined the army of Assisi in battle against Perugia but was taken prisoner and spent a year in prison, returning home a sick and changed man. He roamed the countryside and in the little dilapidated church of San Damiano in Assisi Francis prayed before the Crucifix seeking to know God's will for his future, when the image of the Crucified Christ spoke to him, "Francis, go and repair My House, which, as you can see, is falling into ruin." He took this as his mission and immediately set about repairing San Damiano. Little did he realize then that God was asking him to repair the entire Church through his example of poverty, simplicity, humility and love.

In 1209, Pope Innocent III approved the band of brothers known as Friars Minor, who made their first headquarters in simple huts around the Porziuncula.

In 1212 Francis received Clare at San Damiano and clothed her in the habit which marked the foundation of the Poor Clares, the second Franciscan order. At San Damiano we saw the room where the nuns slept on the bare floor and the refectory (right) with the 13<sup>th</sup> century tables and benches, unchanged since the time of St Clare with her place marked with a posy of flowers, a tradition that has been kept for eight centuries.



Francis dedicated himself to a life of preaching and missions. The most famous Chapter was the Chapter in 1219, to which about 5,000 friars came, including St. Dominic who was so impressed, that he too embraced the life of poverty..

In order to retire from the world for a time St Francis went to the **Carceri**, above Assisi, where he and his original brothers went to pray in solitude, living in caves or huts. There by a stone bridge is an ancient oak, bound by iron rings, in the branches of which birds were living to whom S.Francis had preached. Further afield we visited the mountain retreat of **La Verna**, another hermitage where Francis received the Stigmata towards the end of his life. We arrived at the church after a group of monks from around the world were celebrating Mass. In the floor is a stone where the seraph stood while imparting the wounds of Christ on His devoted follower. On the return journey we visited **Sansepolchro**, a little town that received its name from the great art treasure it preserves : Piero della Francesca's famous fresco **The Resurrection of Christ** in the Museo Civico.

Another day we drove to **Le Celle** Hermitage near Cortona. Here we saw the chapel that was formerly used as a dormitory by the monks. Behind this is the small cell where St Francis lived. The walls are rough but solid, and the hermitage contains eight small rooms large enough for a bed, a table and a chair – the essential furnishings prescribed by St Francis himself for a Franciscan hermitage, where the prime importance was to lead a life given over to contemplation. From here we drove to Passignano on the shore of Lake Trasimino where we boarded the boat that took us to the largest island the **Isola Maggiore** in the centre of the Lake. We climbed to the top of the hill to visit the hermitage where St Francis spent the 40 days of Lent in 1213.

In the Rieti Valley we visited **Greccio**, where in 1223, three years before his death, the first living Christmas crib was assembled by St. Francis.

St Francis went to Egypt with the Crusaders both to seek peace and to preach the Gospel of Christ to the Muslims. In 1219 the army of the Fifth Crusade landed on the coast of Egypt and laid siege to the city of Damietta at the Nile Delta from which they believed they could conquer Egypt, then attack Palestine and recapture Jerusalem. Their opponent was Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil, Saladdin's nephew, described as brilliant and devout, the very epitome of the Islamic culture of his day. Before the first battle St Francis foretold the Crusaders' defeat but his warning was ignored and they were beaten.



During a short truce that followed St. Francis with one companion who served as interpreter, walked from the Crusader lines into the Muslim stronghold at Damietta. The two men, in their simple garb, were taken to Sultan al-Malik-al-Kamil. The Sultan was impressed by the simple message Francis offered – he wished to save the souls of the Sultan and his followers with no hint of criticism or conflict. Being a devout Muslim himself, the Sultan was keen to have talks with his new guest; these took place over the following three weeks. When the Sultan inquired by whom, why and how they had been sent, Francis replied with an intrepid heart that the Most High God had sent him to point out to the Sultan and his people the way

of salvation and to announce the Gospel of truth.

Inspired from heaven, Francis continued: "If you wish to be converted to Christ along with your people, I will most gladly stay with you for love of him. But if you hesitate, then command that an enormous fire be lit and I will walk into the fire along with your priests so that you will recognize which faith deserves to be held as holier

and more certain." The Sultan replied that he did not dare accept this choice because he feared a revolt among his people. Nevertheless, he offered Francis many gifts, which the man of God spurned as if they were dirt. Seeing that Francis so completely despised worldly possessions, the Sultan was overflowing with admiration and developed an even greater respect for him. After three weeks of dialogue the Sultan had the two friars returned safely to the Crusader camp with an armed escort.

The encounter had a considerable impact on St. Francis' life and practice. He was struck by the religious practices of the Muslims, the call to prayer, the approach to a transcendent God and the deep respect they had for the sacred book of the Qur'an. He was present at the Salat, the ritual prayer Muslims performed five times a day. He accepted one gift only from the Sultan - an **ivory horn** used by the muezzin to call the faithful to prayer. On his return, Francis used it to call people for prayer or for preaching. Francis was also given a token of safe passage throughout the Holy Land which he accepted. His journeys throughout the country laid the foundation of the Franciscans being given the freedom to serve the Holy Places to this day.

In the last few years of his life St Francis suffered from stomach illness as well as blindness. A painful eye condition had developed after his return from the Middle East, a disease that is endemic in those countries, trachoma, an infectious disease of the outer eye. Inflammation of the inside of the eyelids causes pain and discharge, that progresses to scarring with the inversion of the lids resulting in the lashes rubbing on the cornea inflicting further damage that eventually leads to virtual blindness.

The end came on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1226 when he was laid at his request on the bare earth in the Porziuncola to welcome "Brother Death". Shortly afterwards Pope Gregory IX proclaimed him a saint and laid the foundation stone for the Basilica to house Francis' tomb. We were shown round the basilica by our Franciscan guide Fr Martin who described for us the magnificent paintings by Cimabue, Giotto and others that graphically celebrated St Francis' life. Descending to the crypt we came to the tomb of Francis himself and four of his early brothers who are buried near him, where we celebrated **Mass**. Elsewhere in the Basilica we saw various relics of the saints.



In 1978 the remains of St. Francis were exhumed so the grave site could be repaired and Pope Paul VI asked scientists to study them. Their findings were that the saint, who died in 1226, was short and frail and his bones were "very porous, denoting a form of malnutrition". They were then reburied after a special rite.

## Sayings of St Francis

- ***Grant me the treasure of sublime poverty; permit the distinctive sign of our order to be that it does not possess anything of its own beneath the sun, for the glory of your name, and that it has no other patrimony than begging.***
- ***Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love.***
- ***Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words.***
- ***No one is to be called an enemy, all are your benefactors, and no one does you harm. You have no enemy except yourselves.***
- ***If God can work through me, he can work through anyone.***

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 2015

This will take place on at **6.30 pm on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2015** at Vaughan House in Francis Street, behind Westminster Cathedral. It will be preceded by Mass in the Cathedral at which the chief celebrant will be **Bishop Nicholas Hudson**, Auxiliary Bishop for the Diocese of Westminster, who will attend the AGM and reception afterwards.

### PILGRIMAGE

**22<sup>nd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

to **Ravenna , Bologna and Padua**

in honour of

**St Dominic and St Anthony of Padua.**

In **Ravenna** we will see the Unesco World Heritage sites with the most precious 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century examples of Byzantine art in Western Europe; **Bologna**, the birthplace of six popes that houses the oldest university in Europe and where St. Dominic lived and died; and **Padua**, with the Scrovegni Chapel decorated with fresco cycles by Giotto, where St Anthony of Padua lived and died..

For further information to join this pilgrimage please write to:

**Fr. Guy Sawyer, 22 Roxborough Park, Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middx. HA1 3BE.**

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Please remember that leaving a **legacy** to the F.H.F. is a way of continuing your support for the Holy Father well into the future. We are a national charity (no. 280489) so your bequest is exempt from inheritance tax. It can be included in a new will or added in a codicil to your existing will.



St Francis assembled the first living crib at Greccio in 1223

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**WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR !**

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**FRIENDS OF THE HOLY FATHER**  
**23<sup>a</sup> Vincent House, Vincent Square, London SW1P 2NB**

Website: [www.thefriendsoftheholylfather.org](http://www.thefriendsoftheholylfather.org)