



The FRIENDS of the HOLY FATHER

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NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2018

90th ANNIVERSARY OF THE LATERAN TREATY WHICH CREATED THE VATICAN CITY STATE

For its first 300 years, the Catholic Church was persecuted and unrecognized, unable to hold or transfer property. Congregations met in rooms set aside for that purpose in the homes of well-to-do individuals, and a number of early churches, known as titular churches, and located on the outskirts of ancient Rome, were held as property by individuals rather than by the Church itself. This system began to change during the reign of the Emperor Constantine the Great, who made Christianity legal within the Roman Empire. The Lateran Palace was the first significant donation to the Church, a gift from Constantine himself.

A papal diplomatic mission existed in AD 453 at the end of the Council of Chalcedon. Once the Council concluded, Pope St Leo the Great asked his Legate, Julian of Cos, who had been following the work of the Council, to remain behind, in order to apply the decisions of the assembly. To this end, he provided him with two Letters of Credence: one to accredit him with the local hierarchy, represented by the Patriarch Marcion, and one for the Emperor of Constantinople, Theodosius. Later the figure of the *Apocrisarius*, or Papal Ambassador, appeared; Pope Gregory the Great had been *Apocrisarius* to the Court of the Emperor in Constantinople.

A historic quarrel began in 1870 when Victor Emmanuel II, King of Sardinia and Piedmont, seized Rome and the Papal States to create the Kingdom of Italy. Pope Pius IX retaliated by excommunicating the King and retired from his Quirinal Palace in Rome to the Vatican Palace, where he locked the gates and began his exile as the 'Prisoner of the Vatican.' The new Italian Government voted in the 'Law of Guarantees,' which granted the Pope an annual income to compensate for the loss of the revenue from the Papal States and the freedom for 'use and enjoyment' of the Vatican. However, the Holy See ignored this and the money was never used. Over the next fifty-six years there was no attempt at rapprochement.

On 11 February 1929 an event of great importance took place, the creation of Vatican City State, and the revival on a small scale of the temporal power of the Popes. For over two thousand years, the slope of the Vatican Hill had been the geographic centre of the Catholic Church, but the Vatican City has existed as the world's smallest nation for only ninety years. The signing of the *Lateran Treaty*, the *Concordat*, and the *Financial Accord* on 11 February, 1929, brought the State into being and settled the so-called 'Roman Question.'



Cardinal Gasparri and Benito Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaty in 1929.

Not until Father Achille Ratti moved from his post as Prefect of the Ambrosiana Library in Milan to become Pope Pius XI, was there any real hope of a solution. He had grown up in a united Italy and it seemed to him that the old quarrel should be resolved. Pope Pius XI made the first move at reconciliation. At his election on 6 February 1922, following his act of acceptance, he said in his first address, '... I wish that my first blessing may go, as a token of peace, to which humanity aspires, not only to Rome and to Italy, but to all the Church and the entire world. **I will give it from the outer loggia of St. Peter's.**' This might seem insignificant, but his three predecessors had imparted their benedictions from the interior of St. Peter's only. The public understood completely the immense importance of this gesture.

Benito Mussolini, the King's first minister, recognised this act for what it was intended to be and sent a minister from the foreign office for private discussions with the Vatican lawyer, Francesco Pacelli, the brother of Mgr. Eugenio Pacelli. The size of a proposed Vatican State was discussed. Pius XI said he wanted a small territory as he wished 'to see things from the standpoint of the blessed St. Francis, just enough to enable the body to remain united to the soul.' In 1870 the Papal Territory had extended over nearly 18,000 square miles; the new State was destined to be smaller than London's Hyde Park.

The first conversation took place in August 1926 and,



following thirty months of difficult negotiations, an agreement was reached. The Treaty ensured that the Holy See retained the position it had always claimed, which assured it of full liberty and real independence in the governance of the universal Church. The *Concordat* made significant provision for religion and the Church in Italy, and the *Financial Accord* indemnified

the Holy See for the loss of the Papal States, with the payment of the then equivalent of £17m and government bonds.

It was raining heavily when Pietro Cardinal Gasparri, Pope Pius XI's representative, drove up to the Lateran Palace shortly before midday on 11 February 1929. Soon afterwards, Mussolini representing King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy arrived with his aides. The signing of the Treaty took place in the same room in which Charlemagne had been the guest of Pope Leo III, over a thousand years earlier. They took their seats at a precious table made of rare wood from the Philippines.

Pope Pius had sent a gold pen blessed by him for their use. After the documents had been signed and exchanged, the Cardinal presented the pen to Mussolini as a gift from the Pope. The ceremony was a simple and austere one lasting less than half an hour. Great excitement reigned in Rome that day. The Italian tricolour and the Papal white and yellow flags fluttered side by side from balconies, something that only a few days before would have seemed impossible.

On the following day, a great Pontifical Mass of thanksgiving took place in St. Peter's Basilica, attended by members of the Italian Government, officials and foreign dignitaries. At the end of this memorable ceremony, the Holy Father had intended to retire to his apartments as the Treaty had not yet been ratified, but yielded to the tumultuous acclaim from outside by appearing on the balcony.

A moment of solemn silence followed, then a military band played the Pontifical Hymn. The crowds knelt with bared heads, indifferent to the rain. The Holy Father traced in the air, with a gesture, as if he wished to embrace the whole multitude, the sign of benediction. A single immense shout swept up to the dome of the Basilica, and lost itself across the Seven Hills of Rome, 'Long live the Pope! Long live Italy!'

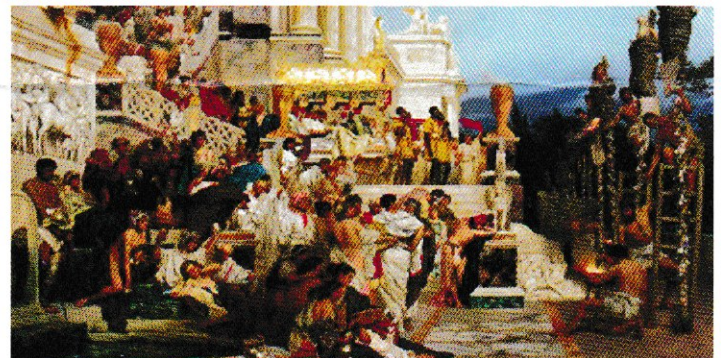
2018 FHF PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS THE EARLIEST CHURCH IN ROME

After Jesus exhorted his twelve disciples to 'go into the world and preach the Gospel to all creation,' they did just that. When St Peter proclaimed the Good News in Jerusalem at Pentecost in AD 33, he converted 3,000 Jews who returned swiftly to their homes across the Roman Empire. The new converts used the sea lanes and the 63,000 miles of paved roads to do so. There were already many synagogues in Rome, and Christianity arrived soon afterwards. The sacred liturgy and the sacraments were also celebrated in house churches; one of the oldest of which was that of Senator Quintus Cornelius Pudens, at the lowest level of the church of Santa Pudenziana.

The Roman Emperors of the time went to great lengths to keep the pagan gods that had been worshipped for centuries. In addition, they regarded themselves as gods and demanded that the people should do likewise, and in order to prove their loyalty, place a pinch of incense on an altar that bore their portraits. The Christians refused to do so, and as a consequence, suffered barbaric torture and death.

In AD 64 there was the Great Fire of Rome. Nero (reigned AD 54-68) was accused of starting the fire to acquire more land to extend his Golden Palace. However, he put the blame on the Christians and subjected them to great barbarity for the amusement of the populace. Tacitus reported the atrocities done to 'a huge crowd of Christians,' (*Annals*, 15.44). Many were thrown to the lions, others bound, covered in pitch, raised on poles in Nero's garden and lit as torches to illuminate it for the amusement of the populace.

Saint Domitilla, a granddaughter of the Emperor Vespasian, who ruled the Roman Empire from AD 69 to 96, provided land for the burial of these martyrs which subsequently became the Catacomb of Domitilla outside Rome. This



illustrated how rapidly the religion of the poor and humble had made its way into the highest classes of Roman society.

Pope Francis appointed Cardinal Ravasi to oversee the restoration and refurbishment of the Basilica of Saints Nereus and Achilleus in the Catacomb of Domitilla, which is near the via Appia Antica, south of the city. The brothers Nereus and Achilleus were soldiers in the Praetorian Guard and were also in the service of Flavia Domitilla.

When the two brothers converted from paganism to Christianity they were executed and their remains were placed in the underground burial site on the land that Domitilla had provided as a resting place for the many Roman martyrs. She too converted to Christianity and was also put to death, her remains were placed beside those of Nereus and Achilleus. A subterranean basilica was constructed later over the remains of these martyrs.

Over the centuries this catacomb was forgotten about and disappeared from view until the great archaeologist, Professor de Rossi, rediscovered it in the 19th century and proceeded to excavate it. Eventually subterranean passages extending up



The Basilica of Saints Nereus and Achilleus in the Catacomb of Domitilla.

to 10 miles were revealed. In the 6th century a Saracen invasion was looming, so the remains of these martyrs were moved for safety to a new basilica within the walls of Rome.

An important aspect of this particular Basilica is that Pope Gregory the Great, the Apostle of England and much of Europe, delivered a homily here in AD 592 extolling the virtues of these two soldier martyrs, Nereus and Achilleus.

The original Basilica of Saints Nereus and Achilleus had already undergone extensive restoration overseen by Cardinal Ravasi. However, further refurbishment was required for the lighting, windows, restoration of epigraphic fragments, and to a large plaque carrying part of Pope Gregory's homily. The Friends of the Holy Father are very pleased to be associated with this restoration work. There will be a plaque on the site acknowledging our contribution.

A LETTER FROM ROME IN 1903 115th Anniversary

Over a quarter-century before the 'Roman Question' was settled by the creation of the Vatican City State, King Edward VII paid an historic visit to Pope Leo XIII which is described in a letter from Robert Holmes Edleston dated 30 April 1903 quoted here:

'...King Edward has come and gone, and the first visit of an English Sovereign to the Eternal city since the days of Canute has been one of continuous triumph. The city was gorgeously decorated in His Majesty's honour... the houses were festooned with wreathing and cartoons of the British and Italian arms with "God Save the King" repeated at intervals along the way he would travel. Punctually at three o'clock on Monday the royal train, composed of King Edward's two Continental saloons and others of the Italian Railways, and drawn by two engines, arrived at the Roma Termini, where King Victor Emmanuel and high functionaries of the Government were waiting. Thence the two kings proceeded between lines of soldiers to the Quirinal Palace, our Sovereign occupying the place of honour.

'The two monarchs wore their military uniforms. As the procession reached the gateway of the former Palace of the Popes the military band stationed in the courtyard played 'God Save the King'. On the Tuesday the King visited the Pantheon, the Colosseum, the Roman Forum and the Villa Borghese.

'On Wednesday afternoon came the visit to the Pope, in many ways the central and most moving item in the Royal visit to Rome. The

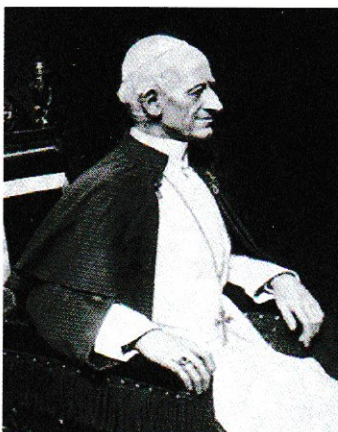
King drove from the British Embassy to St. Peter's in a plain brougham wearing the uniform of a Field Marshal, with the blue ribbon of the Garter. The King was received at the entrance of the Cortile by the Swiss Guard and the English Archbishop Stonor was in waiting at the foot of the Scala Nobili to introduce officers of state. The King then proceeded by lift to Pope Leo XIII's private apartment where the two Sovereigns conversed alone for twenty-five minutes.



King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in 1903

'It was a very impressive sight in St Peter's Square as King Edward drove away between lines of soldiers to the strains of the English National Anthem, the Pope came to the window to look upon the scene. Almost up to the last minute attempts were made to prevent the visit, but the fact remains that King Edward, with his accustomed courtesy, intimated his desire for an audience with the dispossessed Sovereign of Rome and paid a visit as Sovereign to Sovereign to Leo XIII in what still remained to him of his territory.'

PRAYER TO ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL



Thirty-three years to the day after the Miracle of the Sun at Fatima, on October 13th 1884, Pope Leo XIII had a terrifying vision after he had celebrated Mass in his private chapel at the Vatican. On October 13th 1917 he was attended by a few cardinals and members of the Vatican staff after celebrating Mass, when he suddenly stopped at

the foot of the altar in a trance. His face was deathly white and he stood motionless for about ten minutes. On coming round he muttered 'Oh, what a horrible picture I was permitted to see.' He had been shown tremendous actions of evil spirits and their ravings about the Church. But in the midst of this he saw the consoling vision of the glorious Archangel Michael who had appeared and cast Satan and his legions back to the abyss of Hell.

Fr Dominic Pecherino personally witnessed this scene and recounted that the Pope left the chapel quietly, and quickly wrote a prayer on a slip of paper and sent it to the Congregation of Rites to be promulgated.

This is the prayer:

**Blessed Michael the Archangel; defend us in the day of battle.
Be our safeguard against the snares of the Devil.
May God rebuke him we humbly pray
and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host,
thrust down to hell Satan and all wicked spirits
who wander through the world for the ruin of souls.**

The prayer was recited after Low Mass for many years but was eventually removed from the ritual. Nevertheless, at the end of his Angelus message given in St. Peter's Square on Sunday, 24 April 1994, **Pope Saint John Paul II** urged Catholics to recite this prayer to Saint Michael once again:

'The prayer can fortify us for that spiritual battle which the Letter to the Ephesians speaks of: "Finally, draw your strength from the Lord and from his mighty power." (Ephesians 6:10). And to this same battle that the Book of the Apocalypse refers, recalling in front of our eyes the image of St. Michael the Archangel (cf. Revelations 12:7). Surely, this scene was very present to Pope Leo XIII, when, at the end of the previous century, he introduced to the entire Church a special prayer to St. Michael: "St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle; be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil..."

'Even if today this prayer is no longer recited at the end of the Eucharistic celebration, I invite all not to forget it, and to recite it to obtain help in the battle against forces of darkness and against the spirit of this world.'

In this respect, it is apposite that Pope Francis, who needs our prayers more than ever just now, invited all the faithful around the world to pray the rosary daily during the Marian month of October, so that all could join in Communion and in penitence as the people of God. The Holy Father asked that we conclude the rosary by asking the Holy Mother of God and Saint Michael Archangel to protect the Church from the devil, who always



seeks to separate us from God and from each other. This prayer is the weapon against the Great Accuser who 'goes around the world seeking to accuse.' Only prayer can defeat him. The Russian mystics and the great saints of all the traditions advised, in moments of spiritual turbulence, to shelter beneath the mantle of the Holy Mother of God pronouncing the invocation 'Sub Tuum Praesidium.'

The invocation *Sub Tuum Praesidium* is recited as follows:

Sub tuum praesidium confugimus Sancta Dei Genitrix. Nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus, sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo Gloriosa et Benedicta.

We fly to Thy protection, O Holy Mother of God. Do not despise our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O Glorious and Blessed Virgin.

PILGRIMAGE 2019

Our next pilgrimage will be from Monday 1 to Friday 5 July 2019 to East Anglia, which has been described as a land of pilgrims, shrines and mediaeval saints, both local and national. The pilgrimage will be led by our Spiritual Director, Fr Guy Sawyer, and Dr Michael Straiton. Mass will be celebrated daily. Full details of the itinerary and cost are enclosed. Please try to book up as soon as possible as places are limited.

LEGACIES

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.

A happy and holy Christmas and a blessed New Year

FRIENDS OF THE HOLY FATHER

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