

When the protestant Queen Elizabeth acceded to the throne in 1559, Thirlby's fortune changed. An opponent of the reformist cause he was deprived of his see and sent to the Tower of London. When the Plague swept London, state prisoners were moved out and Thirlby was taken into the custody of Archbishop Parker at his home, Lambeth Palace, where he spent his remaining years in captivity. He died there in 1570 and was buried in the parish church.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

AGM – 2013

This will take place on at 6.30 pm Thursday 20th June 2013 at Vaughan House in Francis Street, behind Westminster Cathedral. This will be preceded by Mass in the Cathedral at which the chief celebrant will be Archbishop George Stack who will attend the AGM and reception afterwards.

F.H.F 2013 PILGRIMAGE to LONDON

This will take place in London between Thursday 10th to Sunday 13th October 2013. The final day is the Feast of the Translation of King St. Edward the Confessor to his Shrine in Westminster Abbey where his remains have been preserved undisturbed to this day.

We will commemorate two proto-martyrs connected with England who suffered in the Diocletian persecution (AD 303-313). Firstly we will go to St. Albans, the site of the Roman soldier Alban's martyrdom in the city of Verulamium in 303. The church raised over the spot where he died is now the great Cathedral - the oldest place of continuous Christian worship in the country. Then we will visit St. Pancras Old Church in London, right next to the London railway station that bears his name, which may well date from the time when St Augustine of Canterbury established the new church dedicated to St. Paul on Ludgate Hill. It is dedicated to St. Pancras of Rome, the boy-martyr who died in Rome in 304. The church was restored in the 19th century when excavations beneath the tower revealed old silver vessels and an Anglo-Saxon altar stone made of Kentish ragstone.

Places on the planned itinerary also include Westminster Abbey, Westminster Hall, the Tower of London with a visit to the cell of Chancellor St. Thomas More, followed by Mass in the cell of St. John Fisher. Also included are Lambeth Palace, St Saviour's Cathedral by London Bridge which has origins dating back to the 7th century. Also we will visit Lincoln's Inn Old Hall where Sir Thomas More spent much of his professional life, and Chelsea Old Church where he worshiped.

For further information please write to Mgr. Ralph Brown Prot. Ap., St. Wilfrid's Convent, 29, Tite Street, Chelsea, London, SW3 4JX.

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

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FRIENDS of the HOLY FATHER



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THE YEAR OF FAITH



Pope Benedict XVI described the meaning and purpose of the Year of Faith in his Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, the Door of Faith, published on 11th November 2012. The Year began on that day - the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, and will end on the Solemnity of Christ the King, 24 November 2013.

There are four specific things that the Pope encourages for this year -

- The first is **the study of the Catechism**: "The Year of Faith will have to see a concerted effort to rediscover and study the fundamental content of the faith that receives its systematic and organic synthesis in the Catechism of the Catholic Church."
- The second is **the study of Church history**: "One thing that will be of decisive importance in this Year is retracing the history of our faith, marked as it is by the unfathomable mystery of the interweaving of holiness and sin."
- Third is **the practice of acts of charity**, through which we extend love to our neighbours: "The Year of Faith will also be a good opportunity to intensify the witness of charity."
- Finally is **the public witness**, although the intent might be that this comes after the first three: "What the world is in particular need of today is the credible witness of people enlightened in mind and heart by the word of the Lord, and capable of opening the hearts and minds of many to the desire for God and for true life, life without end."

Pope Benedict refers to St. Augustine of Hippo in Porta Fidei :

Believers, so Saint Augustine tells us, “strengthen themselves by believing”. The saintly Bishop of Hippo had good reason to express himself in this way. As we know, his life was a continual search for the beauty of the faith until such time as his heart would find rest in God. His extensive writings, in which he explains the importance of believing and the truth of the faith, continue even now to form a heritage of incomparable riches, and they still help many people in search of God to find the right path towards the “door of faith”.

In rediscovering his love day by day, the missionary commitment of believers attains force and vigour that can never fade away. Believers, so Saint Augustine tells us, “strengthen themselves by believing”. We will have the opportunity to profess our faith in the Risen Lord in our cathedrals and in the churches of the whole world; in our homes and among our families, so that everyone may feel

a strong need to know better and to transmit to future generations the faith of all times.

Religious communities as well as parish communities, and all ecclesial bodies old and new, are to find a way, during this Year, to make a public profession of the Credo.

It served them as a daily prayer not to forget the commitment they had undertaken in baptism. With words rich in meaning, Saint Augustine speaks of this in a homily on the *redditio symboli*, the handing over of the creed: “the symbol of the holy mystery that you have all received together and that today you have recited one by one, are the words on which the faith of Mother Church is firmly built above the stable foundation that is Christ the Lord. You have received it and recited it, but in your minds and hearts you must keep it ever present, you must repeat it in your beds, recall it in the public squares and not forget it during meals: even when your body is asleep, you must watch over it with your hearts”.

ST AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO’S BAPTISM- 1625TH ANNIVERSARY.



Baptism of St. Augustine

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) was baptized in Milan by the city’s bishop, St. Ambrose, at Easter, 387.

Augustine was born at Tagaste in North Africa, in what is now Algeria. His parents were Numidians – Berbers. His father was a small landowner and a pagan, but his mother, Monica, was a devout Christian and by her prayers and unwavering patience and affection she was largely responsible for her son’s conversion. Augustine was educated at Carthage in North Africa and then went to Rome as a teacher of rhetoric where he made a name for himself by his eloquence and learning. He took up a post in Milan at a time when he became restless with an unsettled frame of mind, changing from one faith to another and spending his spare time in reckless adventure. However, what he heard about Christianity took a deeper hold on him than he knew.

His intellectual gifts appeared to him to be hollow and ephemeral and he began to search after wisdom. It was in Milan that he first heard St. Ambrose preach and he went to hear him again and again. One night, sitting in a garden in a state of deep depression as to his future, he heard a child’s voice singing and repeating again and again “*tolle lege*” – “pick up and read”.

diplomacy resulted in their survival and conversion to Christianity. This was achieved through his friendship with the Queen whose efforts secured the conversion of her husband and thereafter the nation. In the Cathedral treasury one can see the precious gifts sent by Pope St Gregory to the Queen including the famous pectoral cross for the baptism of her son. We were also privileged to have the Iron Crown of Lombardy revealed to us in a side altar in the Cathedral. This is kept in a strong box on the altar, which was ceremoniously opened for us to view. The crown contains one of the nails of the crucifixion brought back from the Holy Land by Constantine’s Mother, St Helena, a gift from the Pope to Queen Theodolinda this time to mark her achievement in converting her people. Incidentally, this was the crown with which, centuries later, Napoleon I crowned himself King of Italy !



The Iron Crown of Lombardy

There were some extra-curricular activities which some of us participated in. One was a visit to La Scala to see *La Bohème*, a truly unforgettable experience. It cost an arm and a leg but we all thought it worthwhile. On our last morning some of us visited the Brera Art Gallery (and some went shopping!). This Gallery contains a number of very interesting pictures most notably Mantegna’s picture c. 1480 of a foreshortened Christ, known as *the Lamentation over the Dead Christ*.

To me this was one of the best FHF pilgrimages I have been on and I have participated in quite a few. We had our usual sociable evenings in our own bar beforehand. The hotel was very accommodating about this! What made this one special? Well we packed in visits to an incredible number of lovely places and we enjoyed some very nice meals together in different tavernas and of course, the people on this pilgrimage all gelled very well and so helped to make it special.

Mary Maxwell.

THE BISHOP OF WESTMINSTER

Thomas Thirlby (1500-1570) has a curious story – he was the first and only Bishop of Westminster. Henry VIII issued letters patent in 1540 when the former monastery of St. Peter was reconstituted as a cathedral church, with a bishop, dean and twelve canons. Thomas Thirlby was named as the new bishop and was consecrated in the Henry VII chapel in his new cathedral.

Unfortunately, Bishop Thilby was lax in his duties. Although he took up residence in the former Abbot’s House (now the Deanery) he was seldom at home and never conducted a visitation. He was absent on two state occasions, the coronation of King Edward VI and the young king’s funeral. Administration was conducted from the parent diocese of London and, in February 1550, the Privy Council decided that the diocese of Westminster should be dissolved to allow more scope for the newly designated bishop of London, Nicholas Ridley. Thirlby was then moved to Norwich before being sent to Brussels.

With the accession of the Catholic Queen Mary in 1553 Thirlby was recalled from Brussels to attend her first Parliament. When Cardinal Pole was made papal legate, Bishop Thirlby was sent to Brussels to receive him before he returned to England from exile. In 1554 Thirlby was appointed to the see of Ely and sent to Rome to collect his bull of appointment from Pope Paul IV.

We began with a tour of La Scala, the world-famous opera house. It is enormous, with 3000 seats: in the stalls, the six tiers of boxes and in the two galleries above. We then had Mass in the magnificent Milan Cathedral which took 400 years to build. It appears like a huge white wedding cake - the greatest Gothic building in Italy made entirely of white marble adorned with hundred of statues and pinnacles. The northernmost bronze door of the Cathedral depicts Constantine delivering the Edict of Milan that established Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire. In the crypt is the crystal shrine of St Charles Borromeo, a former Cardinal Archbishop of the City and prime mover of the Council of Trent at the Reformation. It was also in this Cathedral that Napoleon crowned himself King of Italy in 1805. In the excavations below is the 4th century octagonal baptistery where St.



4th century baptistery – Milan

Ambrose baptised St. Augustine.

In a side street we saw the ruins of the Imperial Palace from which Constantine issued the Edict of Milan in AD 313 that brought centuries of Christian persecution to an end.

A memorable highlight of this pilgrimage was the viewing of Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper in what used to be the monks' refectory at the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie and where Napoleon subsequently stabled his horses. The guide told us about the incredible damage inflicted on the picture. We were privileged to see it restored to what must have been its former glory and to marvel at the astonished expressions and gestures of the Apostles when Christ told them that one of them would betray him. What a genius Leonardo was. He

truly must have been inspired by the Holy Spirit. It was hard to follow that, but we then visited the Basilica of St Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who founded it in AD 379. It was he who baptised St Augustine of Hippo, and it is here that he is buried under the Golden Altar.

On Sunday we had an interesting visit into the countryside to Pavia, the capital city of the Lombard Kings from 568 to 774. Again we had the great privilege of having Mass celebrated in the Carthusian Monastery which was consecrated in 1497. After lunch we visited the Church of San Pietro in Ciel D'Oro, consecrated in 1132 and it was truly inspiring to see the tomb inside the Cathedral that contains the remains of St Augustine which were brought here for safety from Carthage. It is made of white marble and is considered of one of the greatest masterpieces of sculpture in Italy.



Ruins of 3rd century Imperial Palace in Milan

A day at Como was another highlight of our journey. This is the town where Alexander Volta, who invented the first battery, lived and there is a fine statue to him in one of the Squares. We first had Mass in the beautiful Cathedral built in the fourteenth century entirely of marble. There are seated figures of Pliny the Elder and Pliny the younger embossed on each side of the main doors. After a delicious lunch in a local hostelry overlooking the lake we enjoyed a very pleasant trip by boat around this beautiful lake; how wonderful it was to see the beautiful and gracious villas lining its bank.

Next day we visited Monza. No, not to see the motor racing but yet another beautiful Cathedral founded by a Bavarian princess, Queen Theodelinda, who married the pagan King Agilulf of Lombardy in 591. At that time the pagan Lombards had occupied most of the Italian peninsula and the Emperor in Constantinople planned their extermination. Pope Gregory had other ideas – his



Tolle lege

What did this mean? At first he thought that it was a game, but opened the Bible at random and read "Go, sell all you have, give to the poor and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me". He put the book down, then picked it up and opened it again and read the first passage he saw - "Not in riots or drunken parties, not in eroticism or indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh". At once the relief from all anxiety flooded into his heart and all shadows of doubt were dispelled. He became a Christian and was baptized at a magnificent ceremonial by St. Ambrose in Milan Cathedral. The hymn *te deum laudamus* - "we praise thee, O Lord" - was composed by both of them for the ceremony.

Augustine returned to North Africa, to the city of Hippo, where he remained for the rest of his life. He exercised an incalculable influence of Christendom there, not only by his activities and by his writings, but by the saintliness of his life.

THE JEWELS IN THE CROWN

"A people that loses its historical memory is exposed to a dangerous amnesia and sees the possibility of future progress fading into the distance. For this reason, the Vatican Apostolic Library and Secret Archives must be considered as jewels in the Church's crown that represent not only the conservation of the Church's ancient identity but also her future dynamism". So says Archbishop Bruguès, whom Pope Benedict XVI has just appointed as the new Archivist and Librarian of the Holy Roman Church.

The Vatican Library was founded in 1448 by Pope Nicholas V who donated his personal collection of over 3500 books and manuscripts. Today it holds one of the world's largest collections, with some 75,000 manuscripts and over 1.1 million printed books.

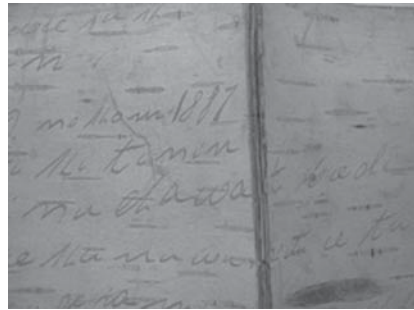
The Library was closed to outsiders until Pope Leo XIII opened it to scholars in 1881. Today some 150 scholars, mostly lay people, work in the Library and Archives, which are open to anyone with the right qualifications for research within the fields of history, law, philosophy, science and theology. In collaboration with the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and with a substantial grant, a million pages of material will be digitalized over the next year.



A reading room in the Vatican Library

The Secret Archives (secret in this sense means the personal possession of the reigning Pontiff) were separated from the Library in the 17th century and comprises some 150,000 items. A few are ancient, but the collection really began in the reign of Innocent III in 1198. Many documents contain important material not just relating to the Church but also to the history of nations, which are an infinite source of information for scholars. The Archives contain scrolls, parchments and leather bound volumes with correspondence dating back over a thousand years. One letter dated

1246 is from Ghengis Khan's grandson, ruler of the Mongol Empire, requesting Pope Innocent IV to travel to central Asia in person to pay homage "otherwise you shall be our enemy". One is more personal, a 1550 note from Michelangelo demanding payment that was three months late and complaining that a conclave was interrupting his work on St. Peter's dome.



Letter from the Ojibwe Indians of Ontario

One of the most unusual documents is a letter written on birch bark in 1887 by the Ojibwe Indians of Ontario, Canada, to Pope Leo XIII. The letter was written in May but datelined "where there is much grass, in the months of the flowers", addressing the pontiff as "The Great Master of Prayer" and offered thanks for having sent a "custodian of prayer" – a bishop – to preach to them.

ST. NICHOLAS – SANTA CLAUS

Countless children have been baptized with his name that means, from the Greek, "victory of the people". There are many variants of his name include Nick, Nicol, Nils, Cola, Colin and Klaus for boys, and Nicole and Nicola for the girls. He is the patron saint of Greece, Apulia, Sicily and Lorraine, and also Russia where he and St. Andrew are jointly the nation's patron saints. Before the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, Russians flocked to his shrine at Bari in Italy. In medieval England St. Nicholas was as popular as in the rest of the Christian world - there are more than 400 pre-Reformation churches here dedicated to him.

St. Nicholas was born in the late third century in Myra, an ancient city now to be found near Antalya in southern Turkey. He was later to become the city's bishop. He survived persecution under Diocletian around AD 300 until the Emperor Constantine the Great proclaimed Christianity as the official religion of the Empire in 313.

Nicholas attended the Council of Nicaea in 325 that defined the Nicene Creed and died at Myra on 6th December 345 where he was buried in the cathedral. His shrine became a centre of pilgrimage, but when the Saracens invaded in the 11th century his relics were moved for safety to Bari where his shrine became even more popular.

One story of the saint tells of a poor man with three daughters. In those days a father was required to provide a dowry for a prospective spouse or she could most likely be sold into slavery. St. Nicholas stepped in and saved the day - he tossed three bags of gold through the window into the girls' shoes that had been left in front of the fire to dry. This led to the tradition of children hanging up stockings or putting out shoes at Christmas eagerly awaiting gifts from St. Nicholas.

RECEPTION FOR H.M. AMBASSADOR TO THE HOLY SEE



L to R: Dr. Michael Straiton, Mrs. Lane, David Lane CMG, Ambassador Nigel Baker, Mark Pellew CVO, Mrs. Katherine Colvin CVO.

Up to the middle of the 16th century foreign courts sent representatives to the Holy See and the Pope sent his legates to those countries. The first known such English official was Thomas Polton, an ecclesiastical diplomat whom King Henry V sent to Rome in 1414, the year before the Battle of Agincourt. England's links were broken in 1534 when King Henry VIII made himself head of the Church in England. However, by the end of the 18th century relations were slowly resumed as a consequence of the dangers that accompanied the French Revolution.

The British Embassy to the Holy See is tiny with only two diplomats on the staff but today its role in fostering the friendly relationship between the British Government and the Holy See is very strong. It is a vital part of the UK's overseas network as the Holy See is both a global listening post for the Catholic Church and provides key services across the world.

A tradition of the Friends of the Holy Father has been to arrange a small reception in London to honour each successive Ambassador of Her Majesty to the Holy See. On 14th November, with the Association of Papal Knights and the Catholic Union of Great Britain, the F.H.F. hosted a reception in London for H.E. Nigel Baker, H.M. Ambassador to the Holy See, and some former holders of that office.

The Ambassador told us that in February a British delegation led by Baroness Warsi, with Henry Bellingham, the Foreign Office Minister and Alan Duncan, Minister for International Development, visited the Vatican for wide-ranging talks on social, political and cultural issues. That meeting celebrated 30 years of full diplomatic relations between the U.K. and the Holy See and offered thanks for the Papal State Visit in 2010.

The Embassy was also involved with the 650th anniversary of the foundation of the Venerable English College in Rome. In 1362 a group of English merchants bought a house to serve as a hostel for English and Welsh pilgrims that later became a seminary for the training of Catholic priests. It remains the oldest English institution abroad and has functioned almost continuously for six and a half centuries. On 1st December the English College held a reception which was attended by the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester representing H.M. the Queen, the first royal visit to the College. The Queen sent a message that their presence "was a sign of the strength of the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Holy See".

PILGRIMAGE TO MILAN - October 2012

In October this year the Friends of the Holy Father went on pilgrimage to Lombardy in northern Italy. The themes of the pilgrimage were Saint Gregory the Great and the Lombards, St Ambrose and St Augustine (of Hippo) in Milan, and Blessed John XXIII on the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. We were very fortunate in having Mass celebrated every day by our three Chaplains generally in the most magnificent of Churches including the Cathedral of Milan.