

February 2012

A.D.:Anno Domini

A Church history supplement for adult Catholics

This Month's Focus: A.D. 1800-1900



Diocesan Mission Statement

"We, the Catholic community of the Diocese of Scranton, are called through Baptism to imitate the servant leadership of Jesus Christ. In union with our Holy Father, the Pope, we proclaim the Gospel faithfully, celebrate the sacraments joyfully, and boldly promote life, justice, and peace in north-eastern and northcentral Pennsylvania."

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Key Events: A.D. 1800-1900

1802: Chateaubriand writes *The Genius of Christianity* which launches a Catholic revival in France.

1815: Napoleon is defeated at Waterloo.

1829: England passes Roman Catholic Relief Act restoring civil rights to British Catholics.

1846: Blessed Pope Pius IX is elected pope and will reign for 32 years.

1848: Karl Marx publishes *The Communist Manifesto*.

1854: Blessed Pius IX defines the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate

Conception.

1858: St. Bernadette has Marian visions at Lourdes, France.

1859: St. John Mary Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests, dies. He often spent 16 hours a day hearing confessions.

1859: Charles Darwin publishes *The Origin of Species*.

1860: St. John Neumann dies. He was the bishop of Philadelphia when that Diocese included the territory now known as the Diocese of Scranton.

1861: The American Civil War begins.

1869: Blessed Pius IX opens the First Vatican Council (20th ecumenical council). It addressed papal infallibility and various errors of the day.

1876: St. Catherine Laboure dies. She had experienced a Marian vision that led to the creation of the Miraculous Medal.

1888: St. John Bosco, founder of the Salesians, dies.

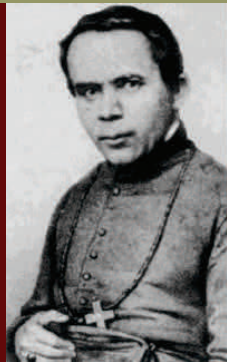
1897: St. Therese of the Child Jesus, the "little flower," dies. She is the patron saint of the missions and one of three female Doctors of the Church.

Key Concept: Infallibility

Vatican I and II both dealt with infallibility. "Infallibility is exercised when the Roman Pontiff (i.e. Pope), in virtue of his office as the Supreme Pastor of the Church, or the College of Bishops (i.e. the Bishops of the world), in union with the Pope especially when joined together in an Ecumenical Council, proclaim by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals [this type of infallibility is fairly rare]. Infallibility is also

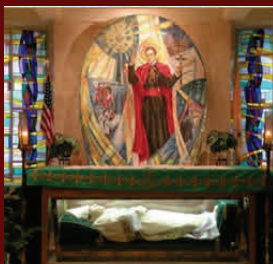
exercised when the Pope and Bishops in their ordinary Magisterium are in agreement in proposing a doctrine as definitive [this is more common]. Every one of the faithful must adhere to such teaching with the obedience of faith" (*Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 185). So, for example, the Pope solemnly defining the doctrine of Mary's Assumption would be an

exercise of the Church's extraordinary Magisterium, while the consistent teaching of the Church from its origins that abortion is a grave sin would be an example of the ordinary Magisterium. Remember, infallibility is not impeccability ("sinlessness"). Everyone is a sinner, but infallibility is a grace promised by Christ (Mt. 16:18, 18:18, Lk. 10:16, etc) to Peter, the Apostles, and their successors.



Some parishes in our Diocese, such as St. Rose of Lima in Carbondale, have St. John's signature on church documents in their archives.

"For you know full well, Christian Brethren, that the Church of God is one."



The St. John Neumann Shrine is located in Philadelphia.

Get to Know: St. John Neumann (A.D. 1811-1860)

St. John Neumann was born in Bohemia and desired to become a priest. He was preparing for his ordination when, in 1835, his bishop put a hold on priestly ordinations because there were simply too many priests (imagine such a problem!). St. John wrote to bishops all over Europe seeking ordination and the opportunity to assist their dioceses, but the situation was the same as in Bohemia.

In the meantime, St. John learned English by working in a factory with English-speaking co-workers. Having mastered the language, he wrote to the bishops in the United States. He eventually received an invitation from the Archbishop of

New York to come to America to serve as a priest. He would never return to Bohemia.

When he arrived in New York, St. John was one of only 36 priests for 200,000 Catholics. His parish in western New York stretched from the shores of Lake Ontario to Pennsylvania. His church had no floor or steeple, but this didn't matter much as he was constantly traveling to minister to the needs of his parishioners. This experience of rural isolation led him to seek a deeper sense of community. He joined the Redemptorists, who were devoted to serving the poor.

In 1852 he was named Bishop of

Philadelphia, which at that time covered 35,000 square miles (including what is now the Diocese of Scranton). He was the first bishop to organize a diocesan school system—increasing the number of schools from 2 to 100 during his tenure.

St. John learned not only English, but French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, and Gaelic in order to hear the confessions of the immigrants in his diocese. He loved his flock, traveling all over the state—sometimes on horseback—in order to minister to their needs. This often brought him into conflict with the elite of Philadelphia. He was canonized on June 19, 1977.

In Their Own Words: from a pastoral letter by St. John Neumann

"For you know full well, Christian Brethren, that the Church of God is one. His elect, whether in heaven or earth, or in the intermediate state of temporary suffering and purification, are all one people, one kingdom of God. His Spirit, the Spirit of truth, wisdom and holiness, animates, protects and governs the Church; and as long as we remain her faithful children, we will no more err from the right way, than the word of God can fail or the throne of His everlasting dominion crumble into dust. It is this firm reliance on His word; this immovable trust in His promises for His own sake and because of His trust which constitutes that divine faith which is the foundation of all Christian virtues. For by faith the just man

liveth and without faith it is impossible to please God.

From this faith springs that obedience to God in His Church and the merit accruing to your souls, for which you can never be sufficiently thankful. This filial obedience to which the apostle exhorts us, "Let us serve, pleasing God with fear and reverence", our Redeemer Himself has made the crowning proof of all His true disciples; the sure bond of membership with His mystical body, the Church; the witness of union with Him who is our Head, our life, our salvation. For He has said - and are there any words of the Holy Writ more worthy of being written in letters of gold, or which should be more familiar to Christians? - "If you love Me, keep My

commandments. He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me. And he that loveth Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. If any man love Me, he will keep My words and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make an abode with him. He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My words. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love; as I also have kept my Father's commandments, and do remain in His love. You are My friends, if you do the things I command you." (John 14:15-24; 15:10-14)".