

October 2011

A.D.:Anno Domini

A Church history supplement for adult Catholics

This Month's Focus: A.D. 1500-1600



Diocesan Mission Statement

"We the Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Scranton, in union with our Holy Father, the Pope, are called through baptism to share in the mission which Jesus Christ has entrusted to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Priests, deacons, religious and laity, under the leadership of our Bishop, cooperate to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the teaching of the Church to celebrate the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, for the salvation of all, and to witness by grace to the Kingdom of God so as to promote a culture of life, justice and peace."

Key Events: A.D. 1500-1600

1505: Martin Luther joins the Augustinian friars.

1509: John Calvin born

1517: Luther nails 97 Theses to Wittenberg Church doors.

1521: Diet of Worms: Henry VIII named "Protector of the Faith"

1524: St. Ignatius Loyola founds the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits)

1530: Diet of Augsburg held to try and reconcile Catholics and Lutherans.

1533: Henry VIII marries Anne Boleyn; Elizabeth I is born.

1535: St. Thomas More is executed.

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1535: John Calvin writes *The Institutes*.

1545: The Council of Trent, the Church's 19th ecumenical council opens first session. Over the next 18 years it will address Protestantism and internal Church reform.

1547: Henry VIII dies

1554: Mary I (Tudor) returns England to Catholicism

1558: Mary I (Tudor) dies; Elizabeth I is Queen

1562: St. Teresa of Avila founds her first convent of Discalced

(barefoot) Carmelites.

1570: Elizabeth I is excommunicated

1571: Naval battle of Lepanto

1574: St. Philip Neri founds the Congregation of the Oratory.

1578: Plague in Milan; St. Charles Borromeo attends the sick

1582: Pope Gregory XIII adjusts the Julian calendar

1587: Mary Queen of Scots is executed by Elizabeth I

1593: Henry IV of France converts to Catholicism.

Key Concept: Reform

The 16th century was a century focused on reform within the Church. It is sometimes assumed that only individuals like Luther and Calvin (Protestant reformers) were aware of problems in the life of the Church. On the contrary, many within the Church were concerned with various issues (lax morality, poorly educated priests, liturgical abuses, worldliness, etc) that were hampering the procla-

mation of the Gospel, though they never left communion with the Church. A brief glance back at previous issues of this newsletter will reveal that the Church undertook internal reform on a number of previous occasions (as well as a number of occasions since the 16th century). It is important to note that authentic reform has never focused on reforming or changing Church

doctrine, which has been entrusted to the Church by Christ. Rather, it focuses on those human and institutional obstacles to effective evangelization. What set Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and other Protestant reformers outside of the communion of the Church was their attempt to alter the deposit of faith entrusted to the Church by Christ.

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St. Charles literally worked himself to death through his tireless evangelization work, dying at age 46.

Get to Know: St. Charles Borromeo (A.D. 1538-1584)

St. Charles was the nephew of Pope Pius IV, who named him a cardinal and made him secretary of state. In this case the Pope's decision was not one of nepotism—Charles would go down as one of the most important Catholic figures of the Reformation period.

Present at the final session of the Council of Trent, where he was personally very influential due to his learning and holiness, Charles was untiring in his implementation of Church reform in Milan. To reform the clergy of Milan (who had been without a bishop for 80 years) he held councils to teach them the Tridentine re-

forms; he opened three seminaries to provide for the education of future priests; and he required all clerics to attend annual retreats for their spiritual nourishment. The steps he took were widely admired and many dioceses used his approach to reform their own clergy.

St. Charles was devoted to the laity, visiting his parishioners as often as possible and founding the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) with 2,000 teachers active in more than 740 schools to educate the children of Milan. He was very active in reaching out to Protestants and bringing many former Catholics back into the Church.

Not everyone was pleased with his reform efforts. Some secular and religious leaders in Milan attempted to thwart his efforts—some of the religious communities even tried to prevent him from entering their monasteries. On at least one occasion an assassination attempt was unsuccessfully attempted.

In the summer of 1578 Milan was beset with plague and most of the city's leaders fled. St. Charles remained and ensured that the sick received adequate food and health care, as well as the sacraments. He was canonized in 1610.

“Be sure that you first preach by the way you live.”



Many seminarians from the Diocese of Scranton attend St. Charles Borromeo seminary in Philadelphia.

In Their Own Words: Excerpt from letter by St. Charles Borromeo

“I admit that we are all weak, but if we want help, the Lord God has given us the means to find it easily. One priest may wish to lead a good, holy life, as he knows he should. He may wish to be chaste and to reflect heavenly virtues in the way he lives. Yet he does not resolve to use suitable means, such as penance, prayer, the avoidance of evil discussions and harmful and dangerous friendships. Another priest complains that as soon as he comes into church to pray the office or to celebrate Mass, a thousand thoughts fill his mind and distract him from God. But what was he doing in the sacristy before he came out for the office or for Mass? How did he prepare? What means did he use to collect his thoughts and to remain recollected? Would you like me to

teach you how to grow from virtue to virtue and how, if you are already recollected at prayer, you can be even more attentive next time, and so give God more pleasing worship? Listen, and I will tell you. If a tiny spark of God's love already burns within you, do not expose it to the wind, for it may get blown out. Keep the stove tightly shut so that it will not lose its heat and grow cold. In other words, avoid distractions as well as you can. Stay quiet with God. Do not spend your time in useless chatter. If teaching and preaching is your job, then study diligently and apply yourself to whatever is necessary for doing the job well. Be sure that you first preach by the way you live. If you do not, people will notice that you say one thing, but live otherwise, and your words

will bring only cynical laughter and a derisive shake of the head. Are you in charge of a parish? If so, do not neglect the parish of your own soul, do not give yourself to others so completely that you have nothing left for yourself. You have to be mindful of your people without becoming forgetful of yourself. My brothers, you must realize that for us churchmen nothing is more necessary than meditation. We must meditate before, during and after everything we do....This is the way we can easily overcome the countless difficulties we have to face day after day, which, after all, are part of our work: in meditation we find the strength to bring Christ to birth in ourselves and in other men.”