



# Adsum

*Adsum* is published by the seminarians of **Mater Dei Seminary** for the enjoyment of our families, friends, and benefactors.

## LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Our newsletter for this month begins with the announcement of ordinations to the priesthood this December 8, feast of the Immaculate Conception, in Guadalajara, Mexico, for two Carmelite religious; and on March 25, 2014, the feast of the Annunciation, here in Omaha for Frater Anthony Short CMRI and Rev. Mr. Nino Molina. The purpose of this advanced notification is twofold: first, to ask for your prayers and sacrifices for our deacons; and secondly to facilitate travel arrangements for those who would like to attend the ceremonies.

These two special feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary were chosen because the Mother of God is the special patroness of our seminary, and it is to Her that we have entrusted the spiritual care and formation of all of our seminarians. For it cannot be repeated often enough that which Pope Pius XI taught, when he quoted the fourth Lateran Council, in His encyclical on the Priesthood *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*: "Should it ever become impossible to maintain the present number, it is better to have a few good priests than a multitude of bad ones." And in another part of this encyclical, Pope Pius XI taught: "If your work is to be blessed by God and produce abundant fruit, it must be rooted in holiness of life. Sanctity, as we have said above, is the chief and most important endowment of the Catholic priest."



*Mater Dei Convent*



*Religious and secular seminarians*

One of the most important aspects of the seminary is the inculcation of good habits. For this end, the seminarians follow a very regimented schedule with set times for prayers, studies, meals and recreation. After six years of living a regulated life, the young priests will need to maintain the discipline they learned in the seminary in order to utilize their time well and accomplish their priestly work efficiently.

Although it is our practice to place our newly ordained priests with older and more experienced priests, the time will come when they will be occasionally on their own. Then the habits they have learned in their seminary days will keep them from spiritual laxity and tepidity.

For the priests and I, despite the burdens of teaching classes all day, there is the benefit of being strictly attached to a very busy schedule. Without a moment to spare, we learn to use every bit of time wisely and usefully. For myself as bishop, I have taught philosophy, dogmatic and moral theology, and canon law since 1989; this has been a great aide to render pastoral advice to priests and to answer their moral questions with greater facility.

This fall four young ladies entered Mater Dei Convent as postulants. Three of the four candidates were from our Catholic schools. After the priesthood, religious vocations are so essential to carry out the mission of the Church and to assist the priests. Let us continue to pray "the Lord of the harvest that He sends laborers into His harvest" for as we all know, "the harvest is great but the laborers are few."

Thank you once again for your prayers and support!  
With my prayers and blessing,  
Most Rev. Mark A. Pivarunas, CMRI

## *The Colosseum, or Flavian Amphitheatre by P.J. Chandlery, S.J.*

If every part of the soil of Rome is sacred, because reddened with the blood of martyrs, that of the Colosseum is especially holy, and to prevent this battlefield of the first soldiers of Christ, saturated with their blood, from being trodden under the feet of the tourist and the curious, the Popes caused the arena to be covered with fifteen feet of sand. Of recent years the chapels with the Stations of the Cross, that formerly stood here, have been removed, and the arena has been torn up in search of ancient substructures and passages. In one of these chapels, that of the Fifth Station, St. Benedict Joseph Labre often passed the night.

The colossal pile before us, "which for magnitude can only be compared to the pyramids of Egypt, and which is perhaps the most striking monument at once of the material and moral degradation of Rome under the Empire," was commenced by the Emperor Vespasian in A.D.

72, and finished by his son Titus in A.D. 80. The captive Jews, led in chains to Rome after the destruction of Jerusalem, were employed on its construction, amid terrible hardships, the Colosseum being thus a monument of their sufferings and tears, as Jerusalem, leveled to the ground, is a symbol of their rejection.

The outline of the building is elliptic, the exterior length being 607 feet, and its breadth 512 feet; it is pierced with 80 vaulted openings or "vomitories" in the ground storey, over which are superimposed on the exterior face three other storeys, the whole rising perpendicularly to a height of 159 feet. The arena is 253 by 153 feet, and covers extensive substructures provided for the needs and machinery of gladiatorial displays. A system of awnings was provided for shading the entire interior. It is estimated that the Colosseum provided seats for 87,000 spectators. The exterior of the building is faced with travertine; the interior is built of brick and was covered with marble.

The dedication lasted a hundred days; several thousand gladiators were killed, "butchered to make a Roman holiday;" five thousand wild beasts were destroyed, and a naval battle was fought in the amphitheatre, which, by means of inundation, was converted into a lake. The unhappy gladi-

ators were chiefly captives or slaves from northern barbarous races, condemned to fight to the death to amuse the Emperor and the people of Rome.

"We who wander among the ruined arches of the Colosseum," says Father Anderdon, S.J., "find a difficulty in picturing to the imagination what it was in the days of its splendor. The rough massy blocks of travertine, now crumbling and exposed, were overlaid, within and without the building, with white marble. The external walls were adorned

with numerous marble statues that stood beneath the arches. Within, the benches went circling round tier after tier till they reached a height that was only less imposing than the lateral extent. Nothing met the eye that was not gorgeous, gay, artistic, costly, and luxurious. The Emperor is there seated on the cushioned marble



under a silken canopy; one of the most prominent portions of the magnificent oval sweep is allotted to the Vestals, who sit there in their spotless white robes, complacent or excited spectators of the bloodshed; near them is the seat for the Emperor; the stately Senate is there, and the company of the Roman knights; matrons in rich attire; all that Rome holds of honoured in society, eminent in literature and art, valorous in war." In the upper tiers were the Roman people.

In the arena, where we are standing, Christian martyrs have knelt with their eyes fixed on the ground, while some 80,000 spectators awaited with impatience the shedding of their blood, and yelled in maddening excitement, "The Christians to the lions!" Tender virgins, youths, boys of noble aspect, and aged priests, have stood here with their eyes raised to heaven, fearless in the midst of that sea of human passions, undismayed by the roars of the savage beasts that were pacing their dens close by.

"What a spectacle it was, savage and sublime! The rays of a brilliant sun inundated the vast edifice with its light; marbles, columns, statues—all were resplendent. The awning with its graceful undulations cooled the scorching rays of the sun and tempered its brilliancy... A sacrifice to Jupiter is first offered in presence of the Emperor... Then



the signal is given for another sacrifice. It is not Caesar, but a young girl, one of the Vestal virgins, who stands and gives the sign. At once the dens encircling the arena are opened, and with bounds, as if of joy at regaining their liberty, the savage beasts, not yet heeding their victims, traverse the whole space again and again. One tiger stands; its attention is arrested. Suddenly all are motionless. They advance stealthily at first as if in fear. A bound! And the martyr's soul is in the embrace of his God."

### *The Martyrs of the Colosseum*

In the persecution of the Emperor Trajan, St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch and disciple of St. John the Evangelist, was condemned to death. There was a tradition in the East that he was the little child whom our Savior set in the midst of His disciples as a pattern of humility, simplicity and innocence. Now advanced in years he was brought in chains to Rome. He knew the fate that awaited him in that city, and was full of holy impatience to shed his blood. "May those beasts," he says to his brethren, "be my gain, which are in readiness for me! I will provoke and coax them to devour me quickly and not to be afraid of me, as they are of some whom they will not touch. Should they be unwilling, I will compel them. Bear with me: I know what is my gain. Now I begin to be a disciple. Of nothing of things visible or invisible am I ambitious, save to gain Christ. Whether it is fire or the cross, the assault of wild beasts, the wrenching of my bones, the crunching of my limbs, the crushing of my whole body, let the tortures of the devil all assail me, if I do but gain Christ Jesus."

He reached Rome on the last day of the annual games, and was conducted to the amphitheatre. There he knelt in the arena, while some 70,000 or 80,000 spectators screamed excitedly, "The Christian to the lions!" The glorious champion of the faith raising his eyes to heaven, murmured the words, "I am the wheat of the Lord; I must be ground by the teeth of the lions to become the bread of the Lord Jesus Christ." Two lions were instantly let loose from the dens: they rushed on him, tore him to pieces and devoured the limbs amidst the applause of the people, A.D. 107.

After his glorious combat nothing was found of him but the larger bones and a portion of the skull. These, St. John Chrysostom relates, were gathered up with pious care by the Christian bystanders, and "borne in triumph on the shoulders of all the cities from Rome to Antioch." In 637, when Antioch fell into the hands of the infidel Saracen, these precious relics were brought back to Rome, and are now under the high altar of St. Clement. A part of the skull is at the Gesu, and a relic of the arm at St. Maria del Popolo.

Ss. Abdon and Sennen, two noble Persians, who came to Rome in the persecution of Decius, A.D. 250, nobly

confessed the faith, were cruelly tormented and finally slain by gladiators in the Colosseum. The remains were exposed to public insult at the foot of the gigantic statue of Nero-Apollo or "Colossus of the Sun" (the base of which may still be seen close to the Colosseum), till they were rescued by the Christians and buried in the cemetery *Ad Ursum Piliatum*. They are at present under the high altar of St. Marco.

In the year 303, St. Vitus, a boy of twelve, of noble birth, who had been instructed in the Christian faith, St. Crescentia, his former nurse, and St. Modestus, her husband, after suffering many cruel tortures, were exposed to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre in the presence, it is said, of Diocletian. The arm of St. Vitus is preserved in his church near St. Mary Major, and his intercession is invoked in many forms of painful disease.

Of other martyrs who suffered in the Colosseum little is known: Father Bonavenia gives the names of Ss. Eustachius, Julius, Marius, Martina, Tutiana, Prisca.

Piazza mentions 260 martyrs, who were condemned to work in the pozzolana pits outside the Porta Salaria, and then shot with arrows in the Colosseum. They were buried by the Christians in the cemetery known as *Ad Clivum Cucumeris*, but their relics have been transferred to St. Martina in Foro and other churches in Rome.

Two large inscriptions placed in the Colosseum by Clement X in the Jubilee of 1675, speak of the amphitheatre as ennobled with the blood of countless martyrs. "Amphitheatrum Flavium non tam operis mole et artificio—quam sacro innumerabilium Martyrum cruore illustre," &c.

The cruel scenes of the Colosseum were but the close of a prolonged series of tortures explained above in our visit to St. Maria in Macello Martyrum. After being scourged and tortured on the rack, the martyrs were finally summoned from their prison to the combat in the arena. They hastily embraced and bade each other a last farewell on earth. Having entered the arena, or pit of the Colosseum, opposite the imperial seat, they had to pass between two files of venatores, or huntsmen, who had the care of the wild beasts, each armed with a heavy whip wherewith he inflicted a blow on every one, as he went by him. Then they were brought forward singly or in groups, as the people desired, or the directors of the spectacle chose. "Sometimes the intended prey was placed on an elevated platform to be more conspicuous; at another time he was tied up to a post to be more helpless. One encounter with a single wild beast often finished the martyr's course; while occasionally three or four were successively let loose, without their inflicting a mortal wound. The confessor was then either remanded to prison for further torments, or taken back to the spoliatorium (i.e., the press-room, where their fetters and chains had been removed) where the gladiators' apprentices amused themselves with dispatching him."

# Father Connell Answers Moral Questions

by Very Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., S.T.D., LL.D., L.H.D.

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## The Publication of the Collection

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**Question:** In a certain parish the pastor requires his parishioners to give their contributions each Sunday in envelopes with their names, and then at the end of each month publishes a list of the contributions, for public distribution. One of the parishioners wishes to know if he is obliged to follow this procedure, whereby all the parishioners are told just how much he gives. Is he permitted to give his contributions with the stipulation that they be not made public?

**Answer:** It is an ecclesiastical law, based on divine law, that the faithful shall contribute to the temporal needs of the Church and of its ministers. The method whereby the funds are collected is left to the local statutes and customs. In many parishes of our land it is the custom for the names of those who contribute and the amounts contributed by each to be published and thus made known publicly. If the parishioners are willing to contribute under these conditions, they are permitted to do so. But if a parishioner wishes his contribution to remain a private matter, he has the right to this privacy. He has no obligation to make his particular contribution a matter of public knowledge. If he gives to the Church according to his means, he is fulfilling his duty. Hence, if he contributes in such a way that the public will not know how much he has contributed, but in such wise that he has truly given according to his means, he has fulfilled his obligations. The pastor has no right to make his contribution public, if he objects to this procedure. It is a well known fact that the publication of the contributions of the parishioners helps to swell the collection. But we must not forget that in following this procedure we should try not to foster the vanity of those who contribute generously because they wish to see their names at the head of the list or to cause painful embarrassment to those who are making sacrifices to give to the church as much as they can afford, even though it may appear a small offering. Hence, the parishioner whom the questioner describes would seem to be acting within his rights, in objecting that the amount of his contribution be made public, as long as he is truly determined to contribute to the church according to his financial abilities.

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## Medicine Before Holy Communion

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**Question:** Can we say that only grave necessity will justify a person in taking medicine before Holy Communion?

**Answer :** The Apostolic Constitution decreed that “the sick, even though not confined to bed, with the prudent advice of confessor, can take something by way of drink or of true medicine, excepting alcoholic beverages.” The Commentary of the Holy Office which accompanied this Constitution asserted that this privilege can be used by the sick “if by reason of their sickness they are unable to observe the complete fast until the reception of Holy Communion *without grave inconvenience*.” The law now in effect (*papal letter*) omits the clause requiring the permission of a confessor, thus leaving it to the discretion of the sick person, whether he be priest or lay person, to judge whether or not he may use the privilege. What is still more important, as far as this question is concerned, the commentary of Cardinal Ottaviani, pro-Secretary of the Holy Office, which accompanied the *Motu proprio*, says nothing about the need of a *grave inconvenience* to justify the use of the privilege. I believe, therefore, that it is the mind of the Holy See to grant this privilege to any person who because of some form of ailment finds it *somewhat* inconvenient (though not necessarily *gravely* inconvenient) to observe the ordinary rules of the eucharistic fast. This was the view upheld by Father Moise Roy, S.S.S.: “The term ‘sick’ must be understood in a wide enough sense and does not suppose grave illness. The sick comprise, not only those who are bedridden or confined to their homes, but also the aged whom old age has debilitated and those suffering a serious indisposition, even though a passing one, as, for example, a splitting headache, indigestion, a bad cold, a hacking cough.”

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