

December, 2008

Adsum

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



Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and
His name shall be called Emmanuel

LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

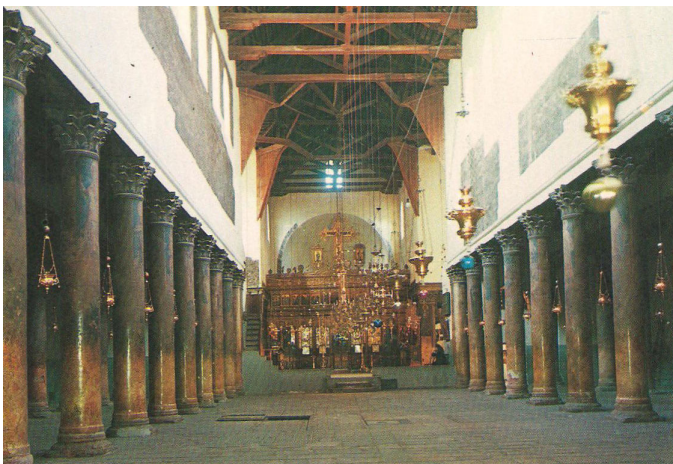
By the time you receive this issue of the Adsum, the feast of the Nativity will be upon us. And for this reason, we have reproduced the pictures of the Cave of the Nativity and the Church of Bethlehem. Here it was on the first Christmas night that the Blessed Virgin Mary brought forth her Divine Son, wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in the manger.

This exact location has been revered from the earliest times and Constantine erected a basilica on the site, which was destroyed by fire and rebuilt in 531 A.D.



The exact location of the birth of Christ

In 1980, I had the privilege to visit the Holy Land and to pray in the Cave of the Nativity. What is unusual about the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is the extremely low entrance door. One has to bend low to enter and immediately ascend steps to the elevated church floor. This was done at the time of the Crusades in order to prevent the Moslems from desecrating this holy place with their animals. It would be a great difficulty to bring cows, horses, or camels into such a low entrance immediately followed by steep stairs.



The Church of the Nativity



Relic of the manger in St. Mary Major in Rome

Another very special place I have been fortunate to visit on several occasions is the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome where a relic of the Holy Manger is enshrined. St. Ignatius Loyola chose this church out of all the churches in Rome where he would say his first Mass, which took place on Christmas night, 1538, at the altar of the Holy Crib. St. Cajetan, writing to a nun of Brescia, who was a relative of his, says that on Christmas night, 1517, he went to St. Mary Major to kneel before the Holy Manger, encouraged by the example of St. Jerome, and that while praying there with great confidence he received the Holy Child into his arms.

As unique and special as it was to visit these holy places, it is a far greater privilege to have the same Jesus Christ that Our Blessed Lady held in her arms, come down on our altar during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and to receive Him in Holy Communion.

How fitting it was for Our Lord to be born in Bethlehem (the Hebrew words for House of Bread) for He is the Living Bread that has come down from Heaven that we might live forever! How fittingly the feast of the Nativity is called "Christmas," Christ Mass. And on Christmas, the priest has the privilege to offer three Masses to celebrate the Birth of Christ. Let us worthily celebrate Christmas as a holyday and not merely as a holiday! Let us keep Our Divine Saviour at the center of this holy season!

During this month of December, I traveled to Argentina and Brazil to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. This is a good time of the year to administer this Sacrament as the childrens' school year comes to an end with the beginning of their season of summer in the southern hemisphere.



Confirmations in Argentina

Fr. Julian Espina and his brother Fr. Pio Espina invited me to come down to Argentina for Confirmation. As it had been several years since I had last met them, my visit provided a good opportunity to discuss the challenges they have faced in the past and the direction they need to take in the future. Since Fr. Gerard McKee, CMRI, annually visits them, he coordinated his trip during my visit.



Brazil who have come to a knowledge of the traditional Catholic Faith and the Latin Mass without any previous exposure. These young men and women sincerely searched for the truth and God led them to find their way in the midst of so much confusion in the world. The day before I departed I gave them a lecture on ecclesiastical history and dogmatic theology with an opportunity for them to ask ques-



Dinner with Fathers Julian and Pio Espina and Fr. Gerard McKee, CMRI

This visit to South America was particularly important because Fr. Pio Espina (Cordoba, Argentina) accompanied me to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in order to establish a new mission and to make contact with future seminarians. Please remember these future vocations in your prayers.

Our plan is to have these young men receive their seminary training in Argentina. The only minor obstacle is the small differences between Spanish (used in Argentina) and Portuguese (used in Brazil). During the next couple of months, Fr. Pio Espina will have to coordinate his interviews with the young men interested in the seminary with his visits to Brazil and work out the details with Fr. Julian Espina.

What's truly amazing is the number of young people in



Lecture in theology in Brazil

tions. They devoured everything they were taught and asked excellent questions about the situation in the Church. By the time Fr. Pio Espina and I left, a notable spiritual bond was formed between us and these young people. Their plan is to acquire a church between Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro which will be accessible to a number of them even though they are scattered throughout all of Brazil.

I would like to personally thank St. Mary's Parish in Tacoma, Washington, for their generosity to provide the needed funds for this trip.

May all of you have a Blessed Christmas and grace-filled New Year!

Most Rev. Mark A. Pivarunas, CMRI

More Answers to Today's Moral Problems

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

Which Debt Should be Paid?

Question: When a man is in debt for food, rent, clothing, etc., should he pay these bills in preference to contributing to the church, supposing he cannot satisfy both obligations?

Answer: Strictly speaking, it would seem that the obligation of parishioners to support their pastors and provide for the material needs of the church is an obligation of commutative justice, for it is based on a quasi-contract (Cf. Tanquerey, *Synopsis Theologiae Moralis* [Paris, 1931], II, n. 1120; Prümmer, *Manuale Theologiae Moralis*, [Frei. im Br., 1936] II, n. 499). If one accepted this principle literally, the debtor in question should follow the rules laid down by theologians regarding the order in which creditors are to be paid, assigning to the church its due place or share in the application of these rules. However, in practice, according to the opinion of reliable theologians, the debt of the parishioner to his church can be regarded as one which binds only in legal justice, and the

failure to fulfil this obligation is not to be condemned as gravely sinful, as long as the pastor is not thereby put in grave need or the other members of the parish seriously overburdened (Cf. Merkelbach, *Summa Theologiae Moralis* [Paris, 1938], II, n. 708; Kenrick, *Theologia Moralis* [Malines, 1861], Tr. IV, n. 64). Accordingly, when a person is forced to choose between paying bills to tradesmen and contributing to the support of the church, he should elect to pay the former. This is merely an application of the principle that a debt which certainly binds in commutative justice and *per se sub gravi* is to be given the preference over one which is to be regarded as an obligation of legal justice, binding only *sub levi*.

Disposal of the Poor Box Receipts

Question: In my parish we have accumulated a large sum of money from donations to the poor box. Very few of the people of the parish can be classed as poor, and in the few instances in which it was necessary to help any of these a small sum sufficed. Can the surplus in the poor box be used for such purposes as sending to summer camps boys or girls who are not impoverished but whose parents cannot pay for such a vacation, or helping toward the needs of boys and girls who show an inclination toward the priesthood or the religious life, but whose parents would find it difficult to provide them with the means of attaining the desired goal?

Answer: Doubtless, some would recommend that this good pastor send the surplus money in the poor box fund, not needed for impoverished persons in his own parish, to some other parish where there are persons who are poor in the strict sense of the term. They would argue that the motive of those who donate this money is to help those who are truly poor, and that, if none such are to be found in their own parish, their gifts should be given to the poor elsewhere. I believe that such a disposition of the funds may be made by a pastor. But I am also of the opinion that the idea proposed by the pastor is fully ac-

ceptable, and that the use of the funds as he suggested within the limits of his own parish is permissible and laudable. Boys and girls who, though not poor in the strict sense of the term, cannot afford the benefits of a good summer vacation, or who lack the funds helpful to pursue what seems to be a vocation to the priesthood or the religious life can be regarded as poor in the wide sense. Hence, I believe that the donations of the faithful of a parish to the poor box can be reasonably applied toward the temporal or spiritual welfare of the young persons of the parish, as described by our questioner.

ADSUM, a publication by the seminarians of **MATER DEI SEMINARY** for the reading enjoyment of friends and benefactors, is sent free of charge to all who request it. If you are interested, please provide your name and mailing address to:

MATER DEI SEMINARY
7745 Military Avenue
Omaha, NE 68134-3356