

From the Pastor

August 22, 2021

Twenty First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost

Saint of the Month - St. Pius X

Tuesday of this week will mark the 115th anniversary of the coronation of Pope St. Pius X. Giuseppe Melchiorre Sarto was born in 1835 in Riese, Venetia, (northern Italy) to Giovanni Sarto, a municipal messenger and postman, and Margarita Sansone. He was the second of ten children in a poor, yet devout family. His family was so poor that he would walk to school shoes in hand, wearing them only at school as to preserve them for future use.

As a boy Giuseppe Sarto walked five miles back and forth to the local elementary school; and after heeding a call to the Priesthood, he travelled to the seminary in Padua. He was ordained a priest by dispensation at the age of twenty-three and gave of himself tirelessly for 17 years in the pastoral ministry. At the age of 40 he was appointed a canon (cathedral-priest) of Treviso, where his hard work and generous charity made a great mark. In 1884 he was consecrated bishop for the Diocese of Mantua, which was in a low state and marked by many difficulties. Bishop Sarto was so brilliantly successful in correcting the abuses in his diocese, that Pope Leo XIII created him cardinal and appointed him as Patriarch of Venice

Ever mindful of his humble origin, he stated, *“I was born poor, I lived poor, I will die poor,”* and his motto was *“To Restore All Things in Christ.”* He was embarrassed by some of the pomp of the papal court and how he was obliged to wear very elaborate and cumbersome State Vesture. *“Look how they have dressed me up!”* he said in tears to an old friend. To another, *“It is a penance to be forced to accept all these practices. They lead me around surrounded by soldiers like Jesus when he was seized in Gethsemane.”* If one looks at some of the official formal photographs of the saint in these “royal” papal outfits, replete with ermine cape and the triple tiara, one can clearly see a hint of annoyance on his face. Yet he accepted it nonetheless as all part of the weight of the office of Supreme Pontiff, offering it up to the good God in penance. Such is true humility.

Interested in politics especially in the wake of the 19th Century socio-political upheaval which saw the dissolution of the Papal States and the unification of Italy, he encouraged Italian Catholics to become more politically involved. One of his first papal acts was to end the supposed right of governments to interfere by veto in papal elections (something never conceded but nevertheless practiced). In fact, this practice had occurred at the 1903 conclave which had elected him. The Austrian Emperor. Franz Josef had asked the Cardinal Archbishop of Cracow (then in the Austrian Empire) to carry into the conclave the imperial exclusion of Cardinal Rampolla. In all likelihood, Rampolla would not have been elected anyway. Instead, a saint was elected Pope. There has always been great speculation as to why the Emperor did not want Rampolla to be elected. Some historians claim that the Emperor had a personal grudge against Rampolla because as Secretary of State he at first refused Christian burial to the Emperor’s son the Crown Prince Rudolf who had died a suicide at Mayerling in 1887 (Pope Leo XIII personally overruled the Cardinal).

In 1905, when France renounced its agreement with the Holy See and threatened confiscation of Church property if government control of Church affairs were not granted, Pius X courageously rejected the demand and the French government eventually backed down. Although he was a lion of the Catholic Faith, famously attacking that “synthesis of all heresies” – Modernism – he was never lacking in true charity for anyone. At Mantua, infamous false charges were made against him in print. He refused to take any action; and when

the writer went bankrupt, the bishop privately sent him money: *“So unfortunate a man needs prayers more than punishment.”*

While he did not author a famous social encyclical as his predecessor Leo XIII had done (*Rerum Novarum*), he denounced the ill treatment of indigenous peoples on the plantations of Peru, sent a relief commission to Messina after an earthquake and sheltered refugees at his own expense. His love for the little ones of God – especially the sick and the poor – was always evident. He himself taught catechism weekly to the poor children of Rome in the Cortile San Damaso. It is this example that has always animated me in my 37 years as a priest to teach religion to the little ones. If the pope is not too busy to teach the catechism, neither is the pastor of St. Paul the Apostle.

Already during his lifetime, almighty God used Pope Pius as an instrument of miracles, and these occurrences are stamped with the perfection of modest simplicity. A man at a public audience pointed to his paralyzed arm, saying, *“Cure me, Holy Father!”* The pope smiled, stroking the arm gently, *“Yes, yes, yes,”* he said. And the man was healed. A paralyzed child, 11 years old, at a private audience suddenly and unprompted asked the same thing. *“May God grant your wish,”* said Pius. She got up and walked. A nun, in an advanced stage of tuberculosis, made the same request. *“Yes,”* was all the pope replied, laying his hands on her head. That evening the doctor verified her recovery. Some orphans in Argentina telegraphed the Pope begging him to heal their Mother Superior of cancer. Cardinal Merry del Val, the Secretary of State, simply telegraphed back to the orphans, *The Holy Father is pleased to grant the petitioned request.* The nun was cured immediately.

When some of his former parishioners from Bergamo came to visit Rome, he received them with great cordiality. In their simplicity and lack of formal diplomatic training they said to the Pope: *“Don Beppo,”* (Father Joe) as they had always affectionately called him, *“we understand that since you have come to Rome you are working many miracles.”* The saint smiled and replied, *“Yes, indeed. You know, things are so expensive here in Rome that one must do a little bit of everything just to get by.”* He did not deny that miracles were wrought through him, yet he diverted their focus away from himself with the fine sense of humor for which he was also well known.

The great papal historian, Baron Ludwig von Pastor wrote fittingly of Pope Pius X: *“He was one of those few chosen men whose personality is irresistible. Everyone was moved by his simplicity and his angelic kindness. Yet it was something more that carried him into all hearts: and that “something” is best defined by saying that all who were ever admitted to his presence had a deep conviction of being face to face with a saint. And the more one knows of him the stronger this conviction becomes.”*

Pope Pius X is perhaps best remembered today for his encouragement of the frequent reception of Holy Communion, especially by children. In the Latin Church prior to 1910, it had been the tradition of many centuries for children to be confirmed at the age of 12 or thereabouts, and to receive First Holy Communion at about 14. What many Catholics believe to be an ancient practice – children’s reception of the Eucharist at seven or eight – is only about 100 years old. The saint said: *“Holy Communion is the shortest and safest way to Heaven. There are others: innocence, but that is for little children; penance, but we are afraid of it; generous endurance of trials of life, but when they come we weep and ask to be spared of them. The surest, easiest, shortest way is the Eucharist.”* And by that, he meant for us to live and emulate our blessed Lord’s Sacrifice that we participate in at Holy Mass.

On the 11th anniversary of his election as pope, August 4, 1914, Europe was plunged into World War I. Pius had foreseen and did all he could to avert it, but it was the blow that broke his priestly heart and killed him. *“This is the last affliction the Lord will visit on me. I would gladly give my life to save my poor children*

from this ghastly scourge.” He died on August 20th – a few weeks after the war began. He was canonized in 1954 by Pope Pius XII who said this was the greatest act of his papacy.

St. Pius X, pray for us!

GOLF OUTING: As we go to print the Golf Outing is still a few days away. I am most grateful for all the hard work and dedication of our committee: Don Cavanaugh, Paula Maturo, Tom Principe, and Anne Maione and all the many parishioners who assisted them. I am grateful to all those who have bought tickets to make this such a successful evening. I am grateful to all who have made donations and offered goods and services for the auction. Please God, next week I will report the great success of the event.

ST. PAUL’S PICNIC: Our annual parish picnic will be held on **Sunday, September 12th**. It will begin at 12 noon and all parishioners are most cordially invited to attend. How nice it will be to greet our friends and fellow parishioners after we were unable to have the picnic last summer of 2020. September 12th is the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary and so we trust Our Lady to provide good weather that day.

VISIT OF BISHOP MURPHY: Today we welcome Bishop William F. Murphy, S.T.D .who will celebrate the 10.30 Mass here at St. Paul the Apostle. Bishop Murphy is the Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Rockville Centre and it was while he was Bishop that our beautiful renovation began. The Bishop has heard so many wonderful things about the renovation from the priests, deacons, and faithful, that he is anxious to see the Church. We welcome Bishop Murphy in the charity of Christ.

REFLECTION: It had always been my hope that after the pandemic many would be moved to be more kind and understanding, that they would be less self-centered, and instead, think of the preciousness of life. In many ways, things seem to be worse now than 18 months ago. A selfishness, entitlement, and coarseness runs through society and the lives of many. So many complain about little things like Goldilocks and the three bears...*this porridge is too cold; this porridge is too hot...*When we are tempted to see ourselves as the center of the solar system, please remember the harrowing images we saw this week: people falling from C-130 aircraft from great heights over Kabul. Others were holding desperately to aircraft...I guess if we think about it, we have very little to complain about. *This porridge is just right!*

In Jesus and Mary,
Monsignor James F. Pereda