

## CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)

Week of 21 September, 2008

To my Catholic brothers and sisters in the Corps:

Here's a thought about how we should be thinking each day.

It comes from a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Catholic writer, Cardinal Newman, and it asks us to focus on our own singular role as ambassadors of Jesus, chosen by God to provide unique service to one another:

God has created me  
to do Him some definite service.  
He has committed some work to me  
which He has not committed to another

I have my mission.  
I may never know it in this life,  
but I shall be told it in the next.

I am a link in a chain,  
a bond of connection between persons.  
He has not created me for naught;  
I shall do good,  
I shall do His work,  
I shall be an angel of peace...

And I will trust him.  
Whatever I am, I cannot be thrown away.  
If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him...  
if in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him...  
if in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him.

He does nothing in vain.  
He may take away my friends.  
He may throw me among strangers.  
He may make me feel desolate,  
make my spirits sink,  
hide my future from me...  
still,  
He knows what He is about.

And that's the crux of spiritual life: TRUST in the God Who made us.  
Something to think about!!

## THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

### WANNA MAKE A RETREAT?

If so, you could check out the Retreat that UCF (United Catholic Fellowship) is planning for the weekend of 17-19 October. You can contact CDT Madeline Lewis for info.

## DID YOU KNOW?

September is a big month for patron-saints of military types and branches. You might fit into one of these.

SEPTEMBER 21 is the Feast of ST. MATTHEW. According to Scripture (Matthew 9:9-13), MATTHEW was a tax-collector before he became one of Jesus' followers. Nothing definite is known about him except what the Gospel story says. Legends from the Early Church claim that his early ministry was in Judaea, and that later, he went to Persia, Parthia and Ethiopia. MATTHEW has always been revered as a martyr, and in Church art, he's depicted with a spear in his hand (denoting the fact that he was killed for the Faith). In the Western Church, his Feast is 21 September; in the Eastern Church, his Feast is celebrated on 16 November. MATTHEW is the patron of the FINANCE CORPS.

SEPTEMBER 22 is the feast of ST. MAURICE OF AGAUNUM. He was a Roman soldier, a member of the Theban Legion of the Emperor Maximian's army (c. 280 AD). This Legion was composed of Christians from Upper Egypt. He and his fellow-soldiers refused to sacrifice to the gods, as ordered by the Emperor, and they withdrew from the Roman army. As a result, the entire Legion (over 6000 soldiers) was put to death. The story was preserved by St. Eucherius, who became bishop of Lyons (France) around 430 AD. MAURICE is the patron of CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS.

SEPTEMBER 26 is the Feast of SAINTS COSMAS AND DAMIAN. Nothing certain is known about these men. According to legends, they left their native Arabia to practice medicine. They were supposedly exemplary Christians who died in Syria during the persecution of the Emperor Diocletian (303 AD). As early as the early-500s, a church was erected at their burial place, and churches were built in their honor at Rome and Constantinople at roughly the same time. Along with ST. LUKE, they have always been patrons of physicians. COSMAS and DAMIAN are the patrons of ARMY MEDICAL SPECIALISTS and the CHEMICAL CORPS.

September 29 is the Feast of the archangels MICHAEL and GABRIEL. In the Bible, angels are God's messenger. The word "archangel" has been used over the centuries to denote "special messengers". So you can find MICHAEL and GABRIEL in the pages of the Bible, performing special functions. MICHAEL (the name means "Who is like God?" in Hebrew) appears in the prophet Daniel as the tutelary protector of Israel. In the New Testament, he is mentioned in the Letter of Jude (verse 9), but in a more well-known story, he also appears in the Book of Revelation as the leader of the heavenly armies that cast Satan out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9). In the Eastern Church, MICHAEL was venerated as having care of the sick, and churches dedicated to him can be found as early as the 300s. In the Western Church, he has been venerated as the head of the heavenly armies and the patron of soldiers. GABRIEL means "Hero of God" in Hebrew, and he

appears four times in the Bible: Daniel 8:16 and 9:21; Luke 1:19 and 1:26. In the Book of Daniel, he is the angel sent to Daniel to explain the meaning of Daniel's visions, and in Luke, he is sent to Zachary and to the Virgin Mary: to Zachary, he makes known the fact that Zachary and his wife Elizabeth will be the parents of John the Baptist, and to the Virgin Mary, he announces the coming birth of Jesus. In Jewish legend, he is one of the four angels who stand at God's throne, and he was also the destroyer of Sodom. In Islamic literature, he is the one who revealed the Koran (Qur'an) to Muhammad. MICHAEL is the patron of SPECIAL FORCES and AIRBORNE; GABRIEL is the patron of the SIGNAL CORPS.

### GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Father, you said we were free to ask you questions, so here is something that I've never been able to find out a lot about, and I'm hoping you could clarify it. Could you describe the history behind the Apocrypha and why the Protestants and Jews do not have these books in their versions of the Old Testament? Thanks, Father.

A: The word "apocrypha" has been used over the centuries to mean several different things, some good, some not so good.

The word has been used to mean "heretical" and "books of hidden wisdom" and "unorthodox" and even "false".

But the way we use it today is to refer to what you mentioned: namely, the nine Old Testament books (or portions of books) which are included by the Roman Catholic (and Eastern Orthodox) tradition and not included by the Protestant tradition. Specifically, these books are as follows:

- a) I Maccabees
- b) II Maccabees
- c) Sirach
- d) Wisdom
- e) Tobit
- f) Judith
- g) Baruch
- h) Portions of the prophet Daniel
- i) Portions of the Book of Esther

These books were all written in the 300-year period right before the coming of Christ; some were written in Hebrew or Aramaic, and some were written in Greek.

And to understand the setting, it's necessary to remember that the Bible didn't just fall out of the sky one day; it was formed over several hundred years...with some disagreement about which "spiritual" books from the Jewish tradition should be included and which omitted. Same with the Christian New Testament (eg, the Book of Revelation was argued about for centuries before it was finally accepted into the Christian Scriptures).

As a matter of fact, the Roman Catholic version of the Bible wasn't finalized until the Council of Trent, around 1560 AD...so there was considerable discussion for 1500 years.

Anyway, getting back to the Old Testament...

At the time of Jesus, there were two main versions of the Jewish Scriptures (what Christians call the "Old" Testament): the Hebrew version and the Greek version.

The Hebrew version was mainly used in Palestine, and the Greek version was used by the Jewish people throughout the rest of the Roman Empire.

These versions were not identical. The Hebrew one didn't have the nine books (or portions of books) listed above; the Greek one did.

As the Christian Church got started, it relied heavily on the Greek version, and eventually, as the Bible was being formed, the Greek version was used for 1500 years...becoming, in effect, the Catholic version.

But at the time of the Protestant Reformation, the Protestant tradition began to use the Hebrew version and eventually omitted the books listed above. So today, your average Protestant Bible (like the Cadet Bible you received) does not contain these books...although more modern translations do include them under the heading "Apocrypha" in a separate section.

And your Catholic Bibles will include them as a part of the main text.

These books are not particularly controversial: some are stories of Jewish history, and some are part of Jewish "wisdom" literature. And even though the original Hebrew version didn't include them as part of the text, the Jews people living in Palestine used them as spiritual reading.

And that's the basic story of the "Apocrypha".

Let me know if you'd like any more detail.

## THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

### STIGMATA:

OK, OK, this isn't "theology" in the formal sense of the word, but it's been intimately associated with the practice of religion over the years, and besides that, it's an interesting topic.

The word STIGMATA is the plural form of the Greek word STIGMA, meaning "a mark". In particular, a STIGMA was a mark produced by branding, and such marks were "branded" onto cattle. In the Orient, they were branded on all slaves, and in Greece and Rome, they were branded on runaway slaves. In some countries, such brands were also found on soldiers.

In the Christian religious sense, the word STIGMATA has come to refer to the signs of Christ's passion, which have appeared on people's bodies. They can be wounds that appear on the forehead, hands, feet and sides of a person. They've also been observed as "an experience of intense pain" in those areas, without actually taking the form of physical wounds.

The earliest documented case of STIGMATA in a Christian setting was the case of St. Francis of Assisi. When he died in 1226, his friends and followers could see the STIGMATA on his hands, feet and in his side. He had received them in an ecstatic vision two years earlier.

Since that time, STIGMATA have been attributed to several hundred people.

The Catholic Church has always been very cautious in commenting on such phenomena, and indeed, the Church has never put any kind of "stamp of approval" on anyone whose body showed such wounds. In short, the Church refuses to pass any judgment on such people. In fact, it has never even attempted to define the nature or the origin of these bodily "marks".

Still, several people in our own time have had the STIGMATA, and they have a considerable Catholic following.

Not surprisingly, there have been many opinions about this phenomenon. Some people think that STIGMATIZATION is the result of a direct act of God in the life of a person who has devotion to the Passion of Christ; this would basically be a “miracle”.

Others think that it has purely natural causes.

Some STIGMATICS experience an invisible STIGMATA first – before any marks become visible. This was true of the Italian friar Padre Pio early in the last century. Most STIGMATICS exhibit a nervous weakness or hysteria as a necessary condition for the appearance of the marks.

Among STIGMATICS, some have the chest wound of Christ on the right side, others on the left. In some cases, the wounds on the person’s body correspond exactly to those depicted on the image of the Crucified Christ before which such persons are accustomed to pray.

Sometimes the wounds are square; sometimes they are round. Further, they may disappear for varying periods of time.

It’s also interesting to note that some Muslim holy men who immerse themselves in the study of Muhammad’s life experience STIGMATA; they receive a wound that corresponds to the one that Muhammad received while fighting for the spread of Islam.

In any case, the phenomenon certainly gives a deeper glimpse into the relationship between the soul and the body when human beings have a profound religious experience.

#### UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

“The things we love  
tell us what we are.”

St. Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

And that’s the way it is, a day like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our time...

and YOU ARE THERE!!

Have a good weekend,  
and let’s pray for one another.  
Cheers from me.

Woodie