

SO YOU'RE GOING TO ROME

Brilliant Beauty of St. Paul's Art Impresses Pilgrims at Second Church

This is the fifth of a series of articles taking the reader on an informal tour of Rome. As the group of Carolinians, who are now making the Holy Year Pilgrimage to Rome, will be visiting St. Peter's and having a Papal audience at the Vatican, the articles are expected to have a special interest to our readers. Dr. Joseph C. Fenton of the Catholic University, Washington, D. C., is the writer.

Visit Spot of St. Paul's Death

In some ways, the beauty of St. Paul's Basilica impressed our pilgrims even more than that of St. Peter's itself. Like all their brother Catholics, they had grown accustomed through the years to pictures of St. Peter's. When they had seen it for the first time that morning, they were struck by the fact that it appeared more majestic and gracious than they had expected it to look. At the same time, however, they were all acutely conscious of a feeling that they were actually coming home to something to which they had become accustomed and with which they were familiar even before they looked upon it.

Contrast to St. Peter's

The great Basilica of St. Paul, in its lonely location out on the road to Ostia, left an entirely different impression. True, they had seen pictures of the building before they had started their jubilee pilgrimage, but no picture had been able to prepare them for the dazzling golden brilliance of the mosaic which covered the entire front of the building above the portico, and which blinded them from time to time as it reflected the rays of the early afternoon sun into their eyes. No picture had been able to prepare them for the great square garden, guarded on all four sides by rows of gigantic pillars, nor for the palm trees that rustled in the wind.

This, the chaplain told them, was the true basilica style of architecture. The old St. Peter's, the edifice built by Emperor Constantine, and torn down to make way for the present St. Peter's, was built along similar lines.

As they stood outside the portico, they were, like most pilgrims to Rome, more astounded of what they learned about this mysterious locality than even by what they saw. The chaplain told them that long ago the very locality they were then visiting had been raided time and time again by the Saracens, and that Pope John VIII, who began his reign 1,078 years ago, had fortified all of this section. For hundreds of years this land around St. Paul's had been called Johannopolis, after the name of the Pontiff who had built the fortress.

Portraits of Popes

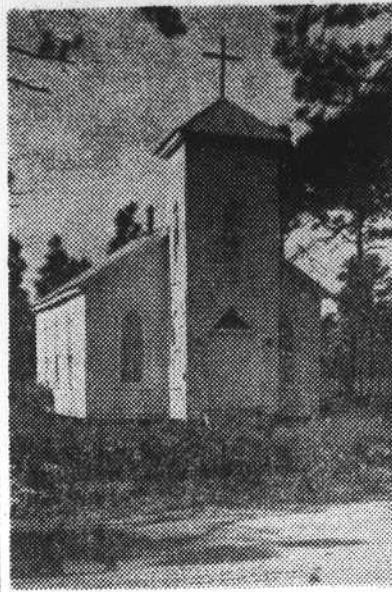
Then they went in the gate, past the great statue of St. Paul in the center of the garden, across the vestibule to the Holy Door, the entrance on the extreme right. When they entered, they seemed to be almost in a forest of columns. Eighty pillars of rare marble stand in four rows. The inner rows divide the nave from the aisles of the church. The outer rows divide the aisles themselves.

In the wall above the pillars the pilgrims saw the rows of portraits of the Popes, the best known feature of this Basilica. They went to the right-hand part of the nave, and saw the portrait of the present Holy Father, and saw that few places remained for the pictures of future successors of St. Peter. They looked at the windows, covered with thin, translucent slices of rare stone, shedding a golden light on the polished marble of the interior.

Prayers Said

They looked again at the extraordinary beautiful mosaic above the arch at the end of the nave. Then they went up before the high altar to say together the prayers which the Holy Father had ordered. Then they knelt again before the brilliant green malachite altars given to the Basilica by Czar Nicholas I of Russia to

HAS 3 MEMBERS



St. Augustine's Chapel at Montague has only three members, all that remain from a full church 40 years ago. A recent visit to the closed church was made by a visiting priest and a short story tells of its interesting past.

Closed Church is Kept In Order; Once Site of Irish Catholic Families

Returning from Wilmington along Highway 421 in Pender County toward Raleigh, a road sign pointing to a sand road on the left caught the eye of the writer. The sign read, "Montague 2 miles." The name registered a recollection of seeing it as the location of a church listed in the Raleigh Diocesan Directory.

Being in no particular hurry even though it took a quarter of a mile to apply the brakes and safely turn around, our historical bent called for a visit.

Sure enough there appeared a large wooden cross over the tops of the long leaf pine, and soon a white-framed chapel, in good repair, was seen.

Two Catholics

A few hundred yards down the road lives Mr. S. A. Vernon and her daughter, Miss Rennie Vernon, the only Catholics left in the community. Confined to her bed, Mrs. Vernon told us of the mission.

Over fifty years ago she remembers Father Thomas Frederick Price preaching in the church, which was filled to capacity with members of the Montague, Bulard, and Charles families. The Coast Line railroad had brought them to this section of North Carolina. Mrs. Vernon did not know when the church was built, and

pray for the people of that unhappy land. Conscious of the fact that they had only begun their program for the afternoon, they then went out into the bright sunshine, entered their taxicabs, and drove off in the direction of the Three Fountains.

Although the place where tradition has fixed the martyrdom of St. Paul is only a couple of miles from the great Basilica of St. Paul, it gives the impression of being unutterably remote from any city. Three churches stand near one another at this Trappist foundation. One of them is the actual Church of the Three Fountains, within which our friends saw the springs which are said to have appeared at the spot where the head of St. Paul struck the ground after it had been severed from his body.

Pious Thoughts

A half hour later, as their cabs drove by the great triumphal Arch of Constantine, with its inscription that gives the first official recognition by the Roman Empire to the true God, the pilgrims thanked God for His blessing in bringing them to see the things they had looked upon that day.

Japan's Catholics Now Number High of 141,638

TOKYO, Japan—The Catholic population of Japan continues to grow in increasing numbers according to the annual statistical report. There are now 141,638 Catholics in Japan as compared with 130,388 a year ago and 119,234 in 1948. The 1947 figure was 109,285.

It is with much pride that we offer our sincere good wishes and congratulations to the Knights of Columbus of North Carolina in recognition of Columbus Day, October 12. The outstanding accomplishments of the Knights of Columbus, organized sixty-seven years ago, are gratifying and noteworthy.

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said Mrs. John Lewis of Long Creek, a descendant of the Montague family, made the third member of the mission church.

According to the story told the chapel was repaired a few years ago by the Very Reverend Cornelius E. Murphy, pastor of St. Mary's at Wilmington, and that Father John D. Kells, an assistant there, visits the community.

Mrs. Vernon offered the key of the church and a visit there showed the interior attractively clean. Even though Mass has not been offered there in a number of years, Miss Vernon conscientiously sweeps and dusts the chapel every ten days. The altar and statues are neatly wrapped in dust clothes.

It was rather sad to leave the little church knowing that the spot, hallowed with Masses offered by saintly priests and attended by devoted people, no longer resounds to the altar bell. The fact that populations do move over a generation leaving tap root sites, is of course the story. But it does seem strange that in a missionary diocese such as ours with a constant demand of new churches, that there should be one or more closed for lack of worshippers.

Rev. F. Koch

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