

Province of The Most Holy Name
Franciscan Fathers

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OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL

NEW YORK CITY 1

December, 1953

My dear Confreres:

I am very happy to report that, when I received the blessing of His Holiness at Castelgandolfo on Thursday, October 15, I had the intention of including each member of the Province and his immediate family. Further, I am glad to be able to record that I received the blessing of the Most Reverend Minister General for each member of the Province.

The Trip. I flew by TWA air tourist from New York to Rome with stops at Gander, Paris and Geneva. The flight left New York at 4 p.m. on November 9 and arrived in Rome at 5 o'clock on the afternoon of the next day (this latter hour in Rome, however, is 11 o'clock in the morning in New York). On the return trip I flew by TWA air tourist from Rome to Shannon, with stops at Zurich and Paris. The next leg of the trip, from Limerick to Dublin, was made by train. From Dublin I flew to Liverpool. I next traveled from Liverpool to Southampton by car, and finally from Southampton to New York on the "Queen Mary." I might report that traveling "air tourist" is not comfortable, mostly because of the crowded seating arrangements. They do, however, feed you well -- and "for free."

In Rome, I was met by Frs. Vincent Fochtman, Daniel Ford and Aurelian Scharf. For the most part, Frs. Daniel and Aurelian took me around in Rome. Fr. Reginald Redlon met me at Shannon, and what I saw of Ireland, I saw with him.

The Curia. While in Rome, I lived at the General Curia. It is on high ground, overlooking St. Peter's and the Vatican. The buildings are monastic in style, centering around a courtyard. The church, although not exceptionally large, is very well appointed, octagonal in shape, with an altar (actually, two altars together) right in the center. On one side of the main altar is the parish church; on the other side, at the back of it, is the Choir. It is a very convenient arrangement.

The Curia is well built and functional. It certainly serves the purpose for which it was built.

Thirty-seven Fathers and 16 Brothers live at the Curia. The administration is a little unusual. The General is the real Superior; however, the affairs of the house are conducted by a Vicar. The Curia houses the living quarters and offices of: Fr. General, the Procurator General, the Secretary General, the Postulator General, the Secretary for the Missions, the Secretary for Studies, the Economo General and the Definitors General. The General Definitorium meets each Thursday.

The Daily Horarium. The day at the Curia begins at 5:15. Masses are offered at 5:30 and 6:30. Morning prayers, Prime and Terce, are at 5:45. Meditation is made during the Conventual Mass (6:00), which all must attend. Breakfast is from 7:00 to 8:00. The offices are open for business from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon and again from 5:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. Dinner is at 12:30; siesta from 1:30 to 3:00. Then come: evening prayers, examination of conscience, Vespers and Compline, at 3:00; Matins, Lauds, meditation, from 6:45 to 8:00; supper at 8:00; lights out at 9:30. There is recreation on Sunday and Thursday, and on other special occasions, which lasts from 8:45 to 9:30. Recreation at the Curia differs a little from what we are used

to: the Fathers leave the dining room, go across the hall, stand around and make conversation, with a drink of wine and some cookies.

On my first day there, Sunday, October 11, I had the honor of being present with the General Definitorium when Fr. General received Cardinal Valerio Valeri into the Third Order. The ceremony was in the General's private chapel.

I was privileged to have 2 meetings with the General. At the first, on Monday, October 12, I gave him my report, and talked over some problems with him. Then, on Thursday, October 15, he invited me back and we discussed these problems and the report at greater length. Fr. General not only understands English but can make himself understood in that tongue.

I would say that my reaction after having visited the Curia and having lived there in official contact with all of those concerned in the running of our Order, was that I came away with confidence in the "front office."

It will interest the members of the Province to know what Fr. Aurelian Scharf's duties in the Curia are. He writes English letters for Fr. General and he is also an assistant to the Economo General.

As I have already said, my trips around Rome were made in the company of Fr. Aurelian and Fr. Daniel Ford. We saw many churches. Each has its specialty -- murals, mosaics, statues. In addition, and of greater importance, is its connection with the history of Christianity, or the tomb of some saint which it houses. It was impossible in the time allotted to me to see all the churches; it was not even possible to examine thoroughly those I did visit. I did see the 4 major basilicas and many other important churches. I believe that only one who has lived in Rome over a period of years gets to know these places with any degree of familiarity.

In St. Peter's, they have a unique way of indicating its size. As you walk up the center, you begin, after progressing about a third of the way, to see inscriptions or markers on the floor, which show you how various famous cathedrals compare in length with St. Peter's. You are at least half way up this center aisle before you come to St. Patrick's in New York. This really gives you an idea of the size of St. Peter's.

There is a fine Franciscan tradition in churches like Aracoeli, St. Anthony's, St. Bonaventure's, San Lorenzo. The Friars also care for the catacombs of St. Sebastian.

The trip to Assisi was made by car; first over hilly, winding, narrow roads, then breaking out into the Umbrian Plain, where for the most part you are on level ground. One notices the towns along the way, built on the edges of cliffs; a practice followed for purposes of defense, I was told. Assisi is so situated. The Umbrian Valley is now a built-up area. The Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels towers over the plain and can be seen for miles. The town itself keeps its medieval look, and this by the deliberate wish of the authorities. If one desires to renovate a house, he must first go to the town fathers with his plans. I understand that you can modernize to any extent inside, but the outside must not be altered.

While in Assisi, we stayed overnight at the hospital of the Graymoor Sisters. The next day we visited San Damiano (memories of St. Clare), the Basilica of St. Clare (her tomb, as well as the Crucifix which spoke to Francis), the New Church (built on the home of St. Francis), the Basilica of St. Francis (where his body rests).

Audience with the Pope. Castelgandolfo is about 35 miles from Rome, the last few of them a steep climb. Pilgrims with tickets enter a courtyard-- there must have been a few thousand there on the day of our visit. As you wait for the time of the Pope's appearance on the balcony, you can feel the tension mount. We arrived at about 4:45 p.m., about 15 minutes before His Holiness came out on the balcony. The crowd cheered and greeted the

Pontiff as they would any top-ranking monarch, but there was more than acclaim here. He spoke first in Italian and then in other languages, attempting to talk to each of the large groups which made up the audience. Before giving his blessing, he explained that he was not limiting it to the pilgrims then present, but was giving it to those near and dear to them as well. I had been given to understand beforehand that his blessing extended to anyone for whom the person present had the intention, and, as already related, I had the intention of getting this blessing for every member of the Province and his immediate family.

The audience lasted for about half an hour. The Pope left the balcony, then came back briefly at the insistence of the people. We left and drove back to Rome with an indelible memory.

Other Sites Visited in Rome. We walked the length and breadth of the Roman Forum one afternoon, saw the Mamertine Prison, the Castel Sant' Angelo, and many other sights, including the Vatican Museum. This really is a sight. You can walk up and down all the corridors of this place at a fast pace, stopping to look at nothing, in about 3 hours. It would take months to see it thoroughly.

After 4 days of visiting Rome, 2 spent in seeing Assisi, it came time to leave. I would say that the single over-all impression left on one who visits Rome, is the power and strength of the Church.

In Ireland, Fr. Reginal Redlon met me on Saturday evening in Shannon and we went to Limerick by bus, about half an hour's ride. I had a nice visit with the Friars in Limerick, including Fr. Paul Plummer, who is now stationed there and who handles the Third Order at the parish in Limerick. We were persuaded to stay over Sunday and drive down to Cork to see the new church that the Friars have recently dedicated there. I was certainly glad I waited, because it is magnificent.

On Monday we went by train to Dublin, stayed on at Adam and Eve's on Merchant's Quay. "Adam and Eve's" is quite an appellation for a church; actually, the name of the church is Immaculate Conception. In the penal days, it was necessary to have a front on the street for a church, and the front for the Immaculate Conception Church was a saloon called Adam and Eve's! The church is still known by that title.

We stayed in Dublin for a few days and saw the city and many of its environs, including the house at which the Irish Friars have set up an Institution something after the fashion of our place in Bethesda, Maryland. They are interested in editing and publishing materials in Gaelic.

The Fathers at Adam and Eve's asked me to go to their choir, which overlooks the church, on Tuesday evening, to see the crowd at the St. Anthony devotions. There must have been at least 3,500 people in the church, which I understand is a typical weekly crowd for this devotion.

I left Ireland in a pouring rain on Thursday morning and flew to Liverpool, where I got a car to drive me through England. I think the most interesting place I visited in England was Abbey House, in Romsey. This is a convent and a school of the Daughters of Wisdom, a community founded by St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort. At this Abbey House occurred one of the miracles cited in the canonization process of De Montfort. A certain Sr. Gerard of Calvary was cured of a very far advanced case of tuberculosis. She is still alive and working in the congregation.

I had the opportunity to visit one of the old-timers in the Company of Mary, which is the male congregation founded by De Montfort. This man had been my pastor in Port Jefferson, Long Island; he is now chaplain at Abbey House.

Another interesting happening in England was in Southampton. I said Mass in St. Edmund's Church there on the morning I was to embark for

home, and didn't worry about a server because the church had about half a dozen people in it and it just didn't seem that it would be possible to get one. I went out and started saying the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar, and all of a sudden the church became alive. The small congregation were all answering the Prayers, and continued to make the responses throughout the Mass. I thought that was quite inspiring.

The trip home on the "Queen Mary" was a bit rough at times, but very restful and very interesting. This liner is really a palace. So much for the trip.

Sebastian Rabin. I have a letter from the Commissary in Bolivia, reporting active persecution by calumny from a public official whom Fr. Sebastian opposed. Please pray for Fr. Sebastian, and if you know him, write him a letter.

Other Items. You will be interested to know that arrangements are under way for moving some Poor Clares into Greenville, S. C. It will probably take about a year to get this done, but we are beginning to acquire property and settle the arrangements. Also, we have a very hearty invitation from the Bishop of Providence (R. I.) to move into his diocese, and we are now in the process of attempting to get the necessary site to handle this situation.

I wish to congratulate Frs. David Baier and Mark Kennedy on being the recipients of the Lector Jubilatus, conferred on them recently by the General Definitorium.

The chaplains are now stationed as follows: Fr. Gordian Ehrbacher is now senior chaplain at Parris Island; Fr. Raymond Beane is out of Alaska and again working in the Military Sea Transport Service in the Atlantic; Fr. Brendan Bradley is moving into the Marine Amphibious Forces at Little Creek, Va.; Fr. Finbar Dowd is in Korea; Fr. Lawrence Pafchik has orders to Yokosuka, Japan; Fr. Timothy Quinn is at Fort Ord, Calif.; Fr. Cormac Walsh is at Fort Meade, Md.; Fr. Denis Anderson, who recently entered the armed services, has orders for Korea. The rest are as before.

The following Fathers from Brazil are in the States on vacation: Dunstan Carroll, Stephen Walsh, Berard McInerney and Dunstan Dooling. Fr. Gregory O'Donnell is returning to Brazil on November 30; Fr. Eric Schoppe is in Siena getting ready to go on the Mission Band; Fr. Robert Lynch was kept on the Eastern Mission Band instead of going to Denver.

This is official to the Junior Priests: The Junior Clergy examinations for 1953 will be given on February 1, 1954, at 10:00 a.m., at the centers published on your bulletin board. This is for all in the United States except the men stationed in Denver and in the Southern States. Arrangements will be made later for these groups. The examinations are those listed for 1953 in the Ordo.

When this letter reaches you, Visitation of the Missions in the Southern States will be in progress.

With kind regards to all the Friars, and asking continued prayers for the Definitorium and myself for the successful administration of the Province, I remain

Sincerely and Fraternaly,

Celsus R. Whelan, OFM

Minister Provincial