

FLORENCE

Tuesday

Dear Father Ed:

In going thru our files I came upon the enclosed data in connection with your parish which I thought you might like to have for your records. I notice that, stupidly, I didn't date ^(Oct. 7, 1928) Archbishop Hickey's speech, but feel confident that you will remember the date.

I'm convinced now that the majority of your congregation consists of stenographers inasmuch as I'm never let in on the fun of helping any more.

Yours sincerely,

Loretta Iperger

This occasion is one of very special solemnity and of marked importance in the work of the Church in the diocese of Rochester, and particularly in this section of the city. It is the initial act in a new parish life, and we have assembled in this temporary structure, I say temporary because it is, of course, not the final church, which has been well planned and well executed, and we have today thanked God who has begun the work in the new parish which has been dedicated to his honor under the patronage of our Blessed Mother and under the title of "Our Lady of Good Counsel."

We hope that it is not a mere coincidence that the first act in this parish would be on the great and glorious feast of the Holy Rosary, which is one of the feasts of high ritual in the Church, and which we celebrated today.

The work of the Church is expected to be, by the blessing of God, a work of growth and expansion. We, therefore, look for the extension of the work in the plan of the Church in the making of new parishes, and in the greater provision for the people as time goes on.

In our city there has been, as you know, for a number of years a steady growth, and we can feel thankful to God that paralleling this phenomenal growth of the people and keeping well paced with it is the growth of the Church in the city, and in the diocese.

We have felt for some time that in this section of Rochester, which has been so thickly settled, there was need for more provision for the people. If we have not accepted this as soon as we have wished to do, we need not say that we were delayed in carrying out the plan which we had in mind because of circumstances. It is all important in the making of a new parish to place the Church and the school, and the other structures of the parish in that locality, and in that part of the locality, which will best serve the interests of the people.

When a city is well settled it is not easy to make one's choice in the selection of places, but all now has been accomplished, and thank God that on this day, the feast of our Blessed Mother, the Holy Mass has been celebrated twice in this Church and the work now is well under way.

The character of the parish has been clearly defined, and the pastor has been made cognizant of the extent of his parish, and he comes to you with a heart burning with zeal, filled with a desire to do his duty fervently before God for religion and for the souls entrusted to his care.

He will meet you just as soon as possible in your homes. He has undoubtedly already met a number of you, and he will find on your part, not only a cordial welcome, but he will find a readiness to, not only meet him, but to make him feel that his burden will be your burden, and that this great family of God's will work solely for the greater honor and glory of God, and that you will be prepared to assist him in cooperating in all the things which Holy Mother Church calls upon you to do.

This Church is here, and the administration of religion will be here primarily to honor God, praise God, and for the sanctification and salvation of souls. Secondly, however, we recognize that in order to acquire property it is necessary to expend, and in these days, a considerable sum of money. Hence you will be disposed, and generously disposed, to do your part in striving to meet the obligations which the new parish will now be called upon to meet.

This is only the initial act in the work of the parish. The next thing, of course, will be the school, and to bring our children together into that place where they will receive under the direction and auspices of Holy Mother Church their education and training which will be the constant effort of the pastor.

My dearly beloved, it is a source of comfort and consolation to your pastor and to you that God has enabled us to take another step forward to carry on his work in this diocese. We are to know that, after all, no matter what the world holds out to us in her attractions and inducements, there is fundamentally something which claims our thoughts and interest, and to which we should devote ourselves most earnest-

ly and sincerely. It is our great problem--the salvation of the immortal soul. We learned this in the first lesson that we were taught in our religious instruction, and it has been brought on down to us through the years. The Church compromises in no way with the truth. She holds fast to those documents committed to her on the mountainside by Christ, the Son of God, and She teaches these truths to her faithful, young and old.

Your Faith is a priceless gift--your Faith is a gift from God, and you must treasure, protect and guard that treasure and gift by practicing it most faithfully and by knowing it better. You must know that the great principle of the Gospel is to teach us the word of God. It is not a perfunctory act which is performed Sunday after Sunday, year after year, it is a distinct message of the inspired Word, which the priest has been duly commissioned and authorized to speak in the name of God, read and spoken to you. Hear the message of that Gospel, and remember these words are the words of God speaking to those who have been the instruments of the divine revelation in the world. Your Holy Church, your Holy Faith, nothing in the world is comparable to it for for you--nothing can replace it for you. Nothing can bring to you in your private, domestic and business life what the Church is able to offer you. She calls upon you to practice virtue, and because it would be pleasing to God to do so. I am saying this because this modest building, this new structure, will be the place for you to come where that Faith will be regularly preached to you. Exemplify it in your life, carry it into your business, be a Catholic--earnest, sincere and practical; not only when you kneel in the presence of God in this Church, but when you walk the streets, or in your homes, or when you meet your fellowman in the affairs of life, not by firmly announcing your life, but by living the life you are.

Parents, it behooves you, while you may have business and social cares, they are not equal to the care of your children. Your children are yourselves reproduced in flesh and blood, and God will hold you responsible for their guidance and training. You give them what is called heredity, you furnish them environment, and there is no one who looms up before the young child so great, so big, so noble as that child's father and mother in the vision of that young child. Those dreams will always lead the child in the right direction, then that child will find happiness.

If, however, the parents fail in their duty toward the child, then, indeed, the child will be expected to suffer.

We can not hope for any success without God's blessing on our work, and therefore you and I today place the work of the new parish under God's guidance and direction. No one assumes of himself to do a work of this kind, and we have courage today because of our Blessed Mother who cared for Him in His early days, was with Him in His sorrows, stood by Him at the foot of the Cross, now with Him in Heaven. She is our special friend and patron of this parish. I want the devotion to the Blessed Mother to be outstanding in this parish--let it be like a great beacon light which will guide you toward God.

I want to commend Father Meagher for what he has done so quickly in this place, and I am delighted to be with him today to give him any encouragement that I may offer, and to tell him that I know his people will be with him earnestly and fervently.

OH, Blessed Mother, this is your Church--we put ourselves under your motherly protection. From this hour by your protection, by your intercession, guide us, help us, that we may carry out the will of our Father who is in Heaven. This is Mary's home, and we are close to a devoted Mother. May she protect us all now, and especially at the hour of our death.

Our Lady Of Good Counsel



A famous sanctuary dedicated to Mary is the shrine of Our Mother of Good Counsel at Genazzano, Italy. This village, nestling high in the Latium hills, about thirty miles southeast of Rome, was in Roman pagan days a resort with baths and games and luxurious living. When Constantine became a Christian he made Genazzano a patrimony of Pope Sylvester for the support of poor churches. Pope St. Mark, who converted the people to Christianity, had a church built here on the site of the pagan temple of Venus and dedicated it to the "Mother of Good Counsel".

The church prospered for a time and then was neglected. In 1356 the Pope assigned it to the Augustinian Fathers to rebuild. But they could get little help. About 1455 a widow, Petruclia, offered all her property to build a new church. Thinking others would follow her example, the Fathers began to build a new church. With the walls a few feet high, the funds ran out, and thus the church remained for several years.

On April 25, 1467, a great crowd had gathered to celebrate the Feast of St. Mark and for the annual fair. About 4 PM they were astounded to see a luminous cloud in the clear sky above, accompanied by sounds of angelic music. Gradually it descended and rested on the far end of the unfinished wall of the church. As the cloud gradually disappeared, the people saw resting on the wall a most beautiful image of Mary holding her child. For a moment they were spellbound -- then all began shouting, "Avviva Maria!" People began praising and petitioning Mary at this shrine and immediately wonderful and even miraculous events took place; so many in fact that a notary was appointed to register the more important ones. In July of 1467 word reached Rome about these events. Pope Paul II appointed two bishops to investigate this new shrine and new devotion. These facts are well-authenticated. Where had the picture come from? The people for a while thought it had come from Paradise, but historians have traced it to a little church on a hillside just outside of Scutari, Albania, where it had been venerated for two hundred years; beyond that, they know only that it came from the East. It was when the Turks invaded Albania that the picture was miraculously carried to Genazzano. A piece of plaster was missing from the wall of the church in Scutari, the same size as the plaster picture in the church at Genazzano.

The real miracle is the picture itself. It is painted on a thin sheet of plaster, no thicker than a heavy piece of paper. For nearly five hundred years it stood unsupported on the wall of the church, resting upright on a ledge; then it was partially supported. During the Nazi invasion of Italy a bomb fell on the church completely destroying the sanctuary. This miraculous picture of Mary, thirty feet away, was not harmed in the least, and the colors are as fresh today as if recently painted; yet, no brush has ever touched it.

This shrine, still in charge of the Augustinian Fathers, draws people from all over the world. The Augustinians have also established an orphanage for boys near the shrine.

Our Lady of Good Counsel pray for us and protect us!

Our Lady of Good Counsel

1 Vir-gin Moth-er La-dy of Good Coun-sel. Sweet-est pic-ture
2 By the light with-in thy deareyes dwell-ing. By the tears that
ar-tist ev-er drew, In all my doubts I fly to Thee Sor-
dim their lus-tre too; By The sto-ry That These tears are
guid-ance, Moth-er tell me what am I to do. By thy
tell-ing, Moth-er tell me what am I to do. Life a-
face to Je-sus, face in-clin-ing, Spelt-ered safe-ly, neath
lab, is oft-en dark and dre-ry, Chas-ting shadows hide
thy man-tle blue By His lit-tle arms around thee
the truth from view. When my soul is most per-pleed.
twi-ning, O Mo-ther tell me what am I to do.
and weary O Mo-ther tell me what am I to do.

LITANY OF OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL

Lord, have mercy on us. Christ have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us. Christ hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God, the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.

God, the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.

God, the Holy Ghost, have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.

Holy Virgin Mary our Mother,

Beloved Daughter of the Eternal Father,

August Mother of God the Son,

Divine Spouse of the Holy Ghost,

Living Temple of the Holy Trinity,

Seat of Divine Wisdom,

Depository of the Secrets of the Most High,

Virgin most prudent,

In our doubts and perplexities,

In our tribulations and anguish,

In our tribulations and anguish,

In our discouragements,

In perils and temptations,

In all our undertakings,

In all our needs,

Counsel and protect us.

At the hour of death.

By thy Immaculate Conception,

By thy happy Nativity,

By thy admirable Presentation,

By thy glorious Annunciation,

By thy charitable Visitation,

By thy divine Maternity,

By thy holy Purification.

By the sorrows and anguish of thy maternal Heart,

By thy precious death,

By thy triumphant Assumption,

Counsel and protect us.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us, O Lord.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,

R. And obtain for us the gift of Good Counsel.



LET US PRAY

Lord Jesus, Author and Dispenser of all good, Who, in becoming incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, has communicated to her lights above those of all the heavenly intelligences, grant that in honoring her under the title of Our Lady of Good Counsel, we may merit always to receive from her goodness, counsels of wisdom and salvation, which will conduct us to the port of a blessed eternity. Amen.

Most glorious Virgin, chosen by the eternal Counsel to be the Mother of the eternal Word made flesh, thou who art the treasurer of divine graces and the advocate of sinners, I who am thy unworthy servant have recourse to thee; be thou pleased to be my guide and counselor in this vale of tears. Obtain for me through the Most Precious Blood of thy divine Son, the forgiveness of my sins, the salvation of my soul and the means necessary to obtain it. In like manner obtain for Holy Church victory over her enemies and the spread of the kingdom of Jesus Christ upon the whole earth. Amen.

OUR MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL

The picture of Our Mother of Good Counsel is familiar to all who frequent the churches of the Augustinian Friars. With them and their people it has a place of special honor. The original, the miraculous picture, has been in the reverent keeping of the members of the Order of Saint Augustine for over four hundred years.

Early Beginnings

The church that enshrines the original fresco of Our Mother of Good Counsel is located in the small town of Genazzano about thirty (30) miles southeast of Rome in the diocese of Palestrina. According to the still current legend, this church stood unfinished and roofless when, on 25 April 1467 the image of the Madonna was miraculously transported there from its former home in Scutari, Albania. Coming to rest precariously on a narrow stone ledge in the wall inside the church, the legend continues, the picture has remained in that position to the present day.

The name, however, is much older than the picture. "Saint Mary of Good Counsel" was the name given to a little church or chapel erected in the fifth century on the ruins of a temple of Venus in a part of ancient Latium. But time told on the primitive church. It was almost a ruin in 1356, when the Augustinian Friars were charged with its care and restoration. The task might have been hopeless if Mary herself had not come with her heavenly image. She seemed determined to vindicate for herself and to perpetuate the favorite title, "Mother of Good Counsel."

Origin of the Fresco

Careful investigations undertaken between 1957 and 1959 for the purpose of restoration have revealed something of the true origin of the fresco. The image of the Madonna — about 12 inches wide and 17 inches high — that the viewer sees encased in its elaborate glass, metal, and marble framework, is part of a larger fresco that once covered a portion of the wall now hidden by the baroque shrine altar. Art experts consulted during the restoration suggest that the fresco, and therefore the Madonna as well, is the work of the early 15th century artist Gentile da Fabriano.

On the site of the present church once stood a small chapel within which Gentile painted his fresco around the time of Martin V (1417-1431). At some subsequent date, but before 1467, the fresco, so it is surmised on the basis of the evidence, was covered over with plaster, and on the wall was hung a terra cotta Madonna, which was known as Our Mother of Good Counsel.

The Event

In 1467 the Augustinian Friars undertook to build a church on the site, enclosing within the structure the wall on which the then covered fresco was painted. This work was sponsored by a widow named Petruccia, who exhausted her means on the project and was unable to continue the construction. At that point the image of the Madonna appeared and was taken to be a token of divine favor. The unexpected appearance was perhaps brought about in this way: when the stone ledge was being inserted into the wall, the plaster covering cracked and separated from the wall, revealing the fresco beneath. The image was immediately hailed as the Madonna of Paradise, an allusion to its apparently heavenly origin; but soon it came to be known by the former title of the shrine, Madonna of Good Counsel.

The unfinished church was completed soon after the event of April 1467 and became the center of continuous pilgrimage. A place was also built for the Augustinian Friars who to this day still minister to the spiritual wants of the thousands that come to venerate the picture of the Mother of Good Counsel. The story of the picture spread far and wide; many came to pray at this shrine. The numerous cures recorded as having occurred since then have caused the Madonna to be called miracuolus.

One striking aspect of the fresco, which has lent a certain credence to the legends surrounding it, is that the upper portion of the image is separated from the wall and leans slightly forward. The fresco, nothing more than a thin layer of plaster, has survived for centuries in this precarious state, even through the aerial bombardment of Genazzano during World War II. Because of this condition, the restoration undertaken in 1957 was a delicate task.

A Legend concerning Its Origin

There arose a legend that the picture had come from Albania, many miles across the Adriatic Sea. Among the first pilgrims who came to Genazzano were two men with a very remarkable story to tell. While praying at a shrine of Our Lady in the Albanian town of Scutari, they saw the picture which they were venerating move itself from the wall of the church. They followed it there, where they saw it rise into the air. High in the sky it was wrapped in a cloud and vanished from their sight in the direction of the Adriatic and Italy. They tried to follow the image. They searched everywhere for it, in all the famous shrine and churches of Rome and other cities. Finally they heard of rumors of a new picture at Genazzano.

They hurried there and at last found the object of their quest, their own beloved holy picture. At Scutari it had been loved and revered for many centuries; then the ardor of the people toward it cooled.

Petruccia di Nocera

In their very early endeavors the good friars were ably assisted in their efforts by the gracious aid of a holy widow, Petruccia di Nocera. From her husband's death, this saintly woman, a tertiary of the Order of Saint Augustine, had devoted herself to the service of the little church and great was her distress on witnessing the neglected condition in which the sanctuary of our Mother of Good Counsel was permitted to remain. To restore it was the ambition of her life, and so strongly was she drawn to the undertaking that she felt inspired to sacrifice her home and moderate income to further this cause. While others might feel daunted, Petruccia never once faltered in her hopes. She constantly reiterated the assurance that the work would be completed, because Almighty God, through the intercession of Saint Augustine and the Blessed Virgin, would vouchsafe to crown her feeble efforts with unforeseen success.

Petruccia, having lived to see her fondest hopes abundantly realized, died in 1470, honored by all. The Augustinians who owed so much to this good tertiary, laid her body to rest at the feet

of the beloved Madonna, with an inscription above which told of her share in the great work accomplished by God at Genazzano.

The Popes and the Shrine

Our Mother of Good Counsel has been called the Madonna of the popes. In truth, since the arrival of the picture, there is scarcely a pope who has not in some way given evidence of great devotion to her. The initial approval of the devotion to Our Mother of Good Counsel was given by Pope Paul II. Later popes ratified this initial approval: Sixtus IV, Alexander VI, Pius V, Gregory XIII, and Urban VIII. In 1682 Pope Innocent XI approved the placing of a golden crown over the image, and in 1753 Pope Benedict XIV established the Pious Union of Our Lady of Good Counsel, a spiritual society to which many indulgences were attached. Pope Pius VI granted to the Augustinian Order, in 1779 a proper Mass and Office for the feast day. Pope Pius IX had a personal devotion to Our Mother of Good Counsel; he made a pilgrimage to Genazzano in 1864.

More than any other pope, Pope Leo XIII, himself a member of the Pious Union, was deeply attached to this devotion, which had associations with his childhood in Carpineto, a town not far from Genazzano. He instituted the white scapular of Good Counsel, inserted the title Mother of Good Counsel into the Litany of Loreto, declared the shrine a minor basilica, and installed a copy of the image over the altar in the Pauline chapel in the Vatican. Above all it was he who coined the phrase: "Children, follow her counsels." Pope Pius XII dedicated his reign to Our Mother of Good Counsel, and Pope John XXIII made a visit to her shrine in 1959.

Augustinians and Devotion to the Image

The Augustinians have been at all times the outstanding promoters of the devotion to Our Mother of Good Counsel. Within the last century there have been two holy men of the Order who have been particularly notable for their zeal in spreading this devotion. Blessed Stephen Bellesini was pastor at the shrine and is buried beneath the main altar and Venerable Joseph Menochio was papal sacristan to Pope Pius VII.

Conclusion

Thus, for five hundred years, the devotion to Our Mother of Good Counsel has flourished and grown. Great artists have fashioned in canvas and stone and mosaic rich copies of the Madonna. One will find the picture of Our Mother of Good Counsel in beautiful shrines and in great cathedrals and churches. Missionaries have carried it to the ends of the earth, and it has found its way into the humblest of homes throughout the world.

The feast of Our Mother of Good Counsel is celebrated on 26 April.

Prayer to Our Mother of Good Counsel

We turn to you for guidance,
Mother of Good Counsel.
Listen to our prayers
and help us in our needs.
Save us from every danger,
glorious and blessed Virgin.

Memorare

Remember, most living Virgin Mary,
never was it heard
that anyone who turned to you for help
was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence,
though burdened by my sins,
I run to your protection
for you are my mother.

Mother of the Word of God,
do not despise my words of pleading
but be merciful and hear my prayer.

Amen.

For further information write to:

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OUR MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL

Children, follow her counsels.

Pope Leo XIII