THE ATHANASIAN

A publication of Traditional Catholics of America † Editor: Fr. Francis E. Fenton, STL † Volume IX, No. 1 † January 15, 1988

THE BEWITCHING OF AMERICA

John Kenneth Weiskittel

A witches' coven gathers in secret to initiate a new member. Through flickering candlelight and the smoke of incense can be seen an altar dedicated to the Roman goddess of the moon, Diana. The high priestess, clad in a blue robe and armed with a ritual sword, approaches the altar while the others begin to dance together in a circle, chanting: "Darksome night and shining moon, East and South, then West, then North, harken to the Witches' Rune..."

This sounds as though it could come from a scene in a second-rate Elizabethan drama, written in imitation of the incantation pronounced by the three "weird sisters" in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* ("Double, double toil and trouble/Fire burn and cauldron bubble."). It could, but it doesn't, for in this case the participants are *real*, members of a modern-day coven in New York City. The initiate recounted the ceremony to "psychic" researcher Hans Holzer in his pro-witchcraft book, *Heather: Confessions of a Witch*. (Mason & Lipscomb, 1975)

Witches in the Space Age? The notion will for many seem too preposterous to entertain seriously. Yet, in the last two decades adherents of this age-old cult have come "out of the closet" and made their presence felt as part of America's occult explosion. Over the past few years news of related activities has included:

• A sermon delivered on May 18, 1986, at the historic St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, in which its 41-year-old rector, the Rev. Henry L. Scott, Jr., announcing his resignation, stunned the congregation by saying that he had been under the spell of a witch for 14 years. (See the 1986 *Facts on File*, p. 460.)

• The protest by 35 witches—counting minors—in Boston last June. Members of the 2,000-strong Council of Isis demonstrated in front of the state Film Bureau office in an effort to prevent a movie adaptation of novelist John Updike's *The Witches of Eastwick* from taking place in Massachusetts. A UPI story, carried as "'We're good, not satanic,' witches say" in the June 6, 1986 *Miami Herald*, reported that among the signs seen were "Stop Exploitation Of Witches," "They Are Not Real Witches In Eastwick," "John Updike Has Never Met A Witch" and, on a baby's stroller, "I'm A Good Witch."

• Minnesota Corrections Department granting a visit by a witch to an inmate of the state reformatory in St. Cloud. According to an item in the November 8, 1986 *Washington Post*, Robert Edwards, who is serving time for second-degree murder, requested a priestess of the Covenant of the Goddess to perform a "purification ceremony" for him. Prison officials initially refused to allow the visit but reversed their decision after being advised by Corrections legal counsel Richard L. Varco that the "Wiccan religion...is a genuine religion and refusal would violate Edwards' constitutional right to freedom of worship." The *Post* quoted part of the Varco ruling which concluded that the witch "seems to perform functions parallel to those performed by priests and ministers."

• The movement for giving equal rights to witches in America's armed services. Among the goals sought by the activists (on leave for their "major religious holidays"), reports Grant Willis in the *Army Times* of October 26, 1987, are dog tags that state "Wicca" or "Pagan" and chaplains to "help them form worship groups at remote duty locations." He interviewed one witch stationed in Germany, Air Force SSgt. Lorie A. Johnson, who said she placed an announcement in the European *Stars and Stripes* recruiting for the newly-formed Farwander Military Pagan Fellowship. And when Willis contacted the Army Chief of Chaplains office at the Pentagon to get an official position on pagan activity, Lt. Col. (Chaplain) William L. Hufham replied: "We acknowledge their right to exist."

• Ongoing controversy in Hialeah, a southeast Florida city near Miami, swirls around a Cuban version of voodoo known as Santeria. Hialeah City Council denied the animal sacrifice cult occupancy on a 1.4 million dollar tract of land, ostensibly because a building on the property failed an electrical inspection. On August 7, 1987, the city issued the permit when its attorneys expressed the opinion that the Santeria "church" was protected by the state's "kosher laws" but, notes Michael D. Dunn in the August 9 *Tampa Tribune*, the regional director of the Humane Society challenged this, saying that "state statutes permit ritual slaughter for consumption only, and not for sacrifice." Although Santerians claim they do eat the animals, "(i)t's not unusual," Dunn writes, "to find decapitated chickens littering the streets of Latin neighborhoods..." and Hialeah Mayor Raul Martinez "has threatened to order the arrest of anyone who sacrifices animals." The December 7, 1987 issue of *Insight* magazine reports that Ernesto Pichardo, the cult's santero ("priest"), has sued the city in response to a "recently passed municipal ordinance that bans the practice." (Florida authorities are concerned about another Afro-Cuban cult, Palo, in which human remains

are used in rituals. It is believed that some recent grave robberies are connected to it.—JKW)

Are such developments reason for concern or merely part of a harmless fad? Modern witches claim that the negative public image they have is the result of misrepresentation and that they aren't satanic or anti-Christian. This, of course, is in direct contradiction to Catholic thought on the matter. Before examining the occult revival, a caution of sorts is in order. Since the subject being discussed touches into some of the darkest regions of the human mind, the following contains material of a baneful nature. Since every effort has been made to defer to common decency, the most obscene, sacrilegious and horrific aspects have been handled discreetly or omitted altogether. Despite the precautions taken, however, that which remains gives more than an inkling of wickedness animating America's occult underground.

A New Image For The "Old Religion"

On July 19, 1692, Gallows Hill at Salem, Massachusetts, was the focus of the town's attention. Five women were hanged there that day, having been convicted of witchcraft. The witch-hunt, begun when three young girls testified that they had been victims of a spell, would not end until a total of 19 people took one-way trips to Gallows Hill. The Salem Witch Trials have come to be synonymous with the power of ignorance and superstition to generate hysteria.

Today, Salem has found that its history makes an attractive tourist lure. Sightseers visit the city by the thousands to see the "Witch House," the "Old Witch Jail" and Gallows Hill. And they may catch a glimpse of a black-caped figure making her way through the streets—Salem's "official witch," Laurie Cabot. The city fathers may have had their tongues squarely in their cheeks when they established the position but the resident enchantress doesn't see it as a joke. In fact, Cabot, 54, was one of the protestors in Boston and is part of a coven that meets in Salem. She told reporters that Updike's novel was "anti-witch" and that she feared that witches would "be depicted as devil worshipers or satanic persons who do evil" in the film.

Louise Huebner is another wand waver who has received the "official witch" title, hers coming from the City of Los Angeles. A resourceful entrepreneur, Huebner has found that witchcraft can be marketed successfully and has written books (including *Power Through Witchcraft*, *Never Strike a Happy Medium* and a witches' cookbook) and newspaper columns; recorded albums, such as *Seduction Through Witchcraft*; appeared in several films and spoken to civic clubs. The position given her in 1968 was a bit more than titular for, writes John Godwin in *Occult America*, "her municipal duties...(included) Special Events Coordinator and Cultural Movement Chairman." (Doubleday, 1977, p. 61) Raven-haired and attractive, Huebner's stint as L.A.'s number one witch was in keeping with both her vocation and the glitter of Southern California. Godwin writes:

> ...Her first official appearance took place at the Hollywood Bowl when she cast a spell designed to give her capacity audience of youngsters "increased sexual vitality." Holding a candle aloft, her brown eyes flashing, she made the crowd chant after her, "Light the flame—bright the fire—red is the color of desire." (ibid, p. 60. She reportedly lifted the spell when her title was disavowed.)

British-born Sybil Leek is probably the best-known witch in North America, perhaps in the world. Her *Diary of a Witch* was a best-seller and she has been widely syndicated as an astrologist. Leek, who now lives in the U.S., boasts of being able to trace witches in her family tree as far back as 400 years. While her features give her the look of a gypsy fortune-teller, she speaks with a cultured English accent. Her household has included a jackdaw (a bird of the crow family that nests in ruins), named Hotfoot Jackson, and two boa constrictors. She defends her beliefs, saying they predate, but don't oppose, Christianity. "It is not anti-Christian and not heathen," Leek states, "It's the Old Religion because it goes back to a time when man was first on earth, when he had those religious, spiritual feelings...What we're really doing is giving a general hymn of praise to the universe and all the things in it." (cited, Godwin, p. 63)

Witches are now engaged in a campaign to fight what they call "defamation of character." Leo Louis Martello, a lapsed Catholic who now is a practicing warlock (male witch), has produced a "Witch Manifesto" to right past "offenses." Long hair and dark beard give Martello the distinct air of a sorcerer (Godwin describes him as "a dry-cleaned version of Rasputin with beads"). The manifesto makes the following demands: "(a) the moral condemnation of the Catholic Church for the torture and murder of witches, and (b) a suit for 500 million dollars in damages and reparations, to be paid by the Vatican to their descendants." (Godwin, p. 68) When Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) introduced legislation in 1985 that would remove tax-exempt status to organized pagan groups, the Wisconsin-based Circle Sanctuary, which calls itself a Wiccan Church, mounted a drive that helped kill the proposed legislation. The following year it distributed a flyer, "Save Circle Sanctuary!", asking for assistance in battling the harassment it was receiving from local officials. Readers were told that any money going to the group's defense fund was "tax deductible" and urged support through a variety of means: "Work magick, pray and meditate for us," "(e)nergize a rock, crystal or other stone and send it to us for our Stone Circle," and "(p)ut us in touch with sympathetic Christian clergy and lay people (especially Lutherans) who will write letters on behalf of us and the *Wiccan Religion*..." Circle High Priestess Selena Fox said, in the course of a phone conversation made in conjunction with this article, that its legal fight was still going on and that the American Civil Liberties Union has entered the fray for the Wiccans.

From the colonial days, when witchcraft was a felony, America has now moved to tolerate and legitimize pagan groups. The usual estimate given for the number of people involved in the movement is 40,000, but this doesn't take into account those who practice Latin American forms of witchcraft (in Florida alone, as many as 65,000 take part in Santeria); or who are on the fringe, such as a certain element of the New Age craze (witches run ads in *New Age* and other movement journals); or, with darker implications, the so-called "black metal" rock bands (the name comes from their sinister, often overtly satanic, lyrics, not to their racial makeup) and their fans, who attend concerts bedecked in inverted crosses and other anti-Christian jewelry.

Further from the core of activity, but of a similar spirit, can be seen the rising number of *non*-occult bookstores that stock works authored by witches; the promotion of crystals as repositories for magical powers; the alleged communications given by discarnate spirits as popularized in actress Shirley MacLaine's well-publicized "channeling" experiences; the 68 universities that have offered courses on it; and millions of Americans who seek solace in daily horoscopes. Clearly, what is being discussed here is a relatively small phenomenon when weighed against the overall cultural life of the nation—but it is a phenomenon that is growing unchecked and with the tacit approval of the government.

Which Is Witch?

If you asked the average American to describe a witch, chances are good that the answer would be something of the order of the evil queen in *Snow White*, the loveable, nose-twitching housewitch Samantha on the old TV series, *Bewitched* or, possibly, representatives of both persuasions in *The Wizard of Oz*. Ask "Do you believe in witches?" and some may laugh at you.

Since at least the "Enlightenment" it has been considered a sign of education to scoff at the mere suggestion that witches could exist. To be "in the know" necessarily has meant to regard belief in witchcraft as so much medieval humbug, no more worthy of credence than such other "debris" of that bygone era as angels, demons, ghosts, miracles (and, for the "truly enlightened," God). E. E. Evans-Pritchard, in *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic*, writes that witchcraft "is an imaginary offense because it is impossible," but another writer on the subject, B. G. Parrinder, observes that "(t)here is little sign of a decrease in witchcraft belief with increasing education." (cited, William J. Petersen, *Those Curious New Cults*, Pivot, 1975, pp. 78-79) Indeed, many of the twentieth century's leading researchers in this area have been scholars of the highest repute. And, despite rationalist protests, it seems that the comment made over a decade ago by the Canadian news weekly, *Maclean's*, still holds true: "The Western world plainly wants to believe in magic."

The skepticism of the past 200 years is at odds with human experience for, in every land and time, people of all ranks have affirmed the reality of witches. But what is witchcraft? The broadest possible definition might be the calling forth (and, in some cases, worship) of nature or spirits (gods or Satan) to fulfill petitions. Whether the requests are for good or evil depends solely on the disposition of the witch involved: a *white* witch seeks only good, a *black* witch seeks to use magic (or *magick*, as some occultists prefer, to distinguish it from stage illusions) to harm others and a *gray* witch is an amoral creature who conjures in either mode. While there is some disagreement over the derivation of the term "witch," it is commonly considered to come from the Saxon or Old English word "wicca."

Selena Fox of Circle Sanctuary has made it clear that she sees herself and her group as practicing white magic. Their philosophy is not unlike the Ten Commandments or Golden Rule, she maintains, pointing out the similarities between them and the Witch's Precept (the classic formulation reads, "An ye harm none, do what ye will."). They do not engage in ritual sex as some covens do (a lewd fivefold kiss and intercourse) except for the *symbolic* dancing of the May Pole. Nor do they perform sacrifices, animal or otherwise. The Divine (she disdains to use the word *God*) is worshiped through nature and this is done, she says, "to bring more peace and understanding to the world." Throughout our conversation she was polite (even after learning the article would not favor her group) and apparently candid about her beliefs. (The only time she obviously dodged a question was when asked about the name of a staffer at National Public Radio who had been identified as a witch by *New Age* magazine.)

The Politics of Witchcraft

The revival of witchcraft can be traced to the late 1960's when American youth were at their most rebellious. Drugs, "free love," rock music, revolt and occultism blended into a witches' brew called *the new consciousness*. One of the strangest of that era's many strange events took place on October 21, 1967, at the Pentagon. As part of an anti-war demonstration, an attempt was made by witches and other occultists to *levitate* the Pentagon. One astonished Leftist, Theodore Roszak, has remarked how peculiar it was to see the rhetoric of Marx and Lenin "yielding place to spells and incantations!" (*The Making of a Counter Culture*, Anchor, 1969, pp. 124-25)

For the Catholic, of course, the connection is easier to grasp. Almighty God, through His prophet Samuel, has declared: "...it is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel..." (I Kings 15:23. Significantly, these words were directed to Saul; he chose to ignore them, continued to sin—even visiting a witch for guidance—and died a terrible death.) Throughout the Christian age the darker members of the Craft have been political as well as religious revolutionaries. In the fourth century the Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate, in renouncing the Church, persecuting the faithful and reintroducing worship of the old gods, "offered human sacrifice to devils, sought oracles from familiar spirits, and companioned with the fraternity of sorcerers." (Montague Summers, p. 73)

After Christianity was securely reestablished as the foundation of kingdoms, the covens' revolt became aimed at the State along with the Church. To cite but one example, Pennethorne Hughes, a senior staff member of the British Broadcasting Corporation for many years, writes regarding an attempt on the life of King James I of England:

> The witches were particularly employed by the political opposition...It was a genuine conspiracy to overthrow James in the interests of Francis, afterwards Earl of Bothwell, who was notoriously addicted to black arts and who had claims to be heir to the throne. Whilst all the ordinary paraphernalia of sympathetic magic (often by mutilating a doll or other image made to represent the intended victim—JKW), storm-raising and so on were brought into play, the intention was also to use poison and corrosive ointments...(*Witchcraft*, Pelican, 1967 ed., pp. 192-193)

That satanists played a great role in such upheavals as the French Revolution is well documented by such writers as the Abbé Barruel, and the Lutheran pastor, the Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, has made a strong case for believing the same impulse is at work in modern Communism in his book, *Was Karl Marx a Satanist?* Father Montague Summers, reflecting on the European witch trials, holds that "upon close investigation it seems plain that the witches were a vast political movement, an organized society which was anti-social and anarchical, a worldwide plot against civilization." (in his translation, *Malleus Maleficarum*, Dover, 1971, p. xvii)

Modern manifestations have taken on a feminist cast. WITCH (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell) is so extreme that it makes NOW look like the Eagle Forum. In one statement it praises past witches as "Friendly Heads (that is, drug users—JKW) and Dealers, the first birth-control practitioners and abortionists," while in another it attacks marriage as "legal whoredom for women." (Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful*, Random House 1970, pp. 539, 543) Pope Innocent VIII, in his Bull in 1484 calling for production of *Malleus Maleficarum*, states that witches of his day "have slain infants yet in the mother's womb" and "hindered...women from conceiving," while the authors of that manual tell how herbs were used to achieve these effects. Mary F. Bednarowski of Union (Protestant) Theological Seminary writes that "(a)ny hint of the supernatural is missing from feminist witchcraft, but neither does the movement accept the 'merely' natural world of the materialist." (Howard Kerr & Charles L. Crow, ed., *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives*, University of Illinois, 1983, p. 188) This can mean anything from pantheism to outright atheism though some still worship gods or Satan. The target of the agitation, writes Naomi Goldenberg in *Changing of the Gods: Feminism & the End of Traditional Religions*, is "a civilization in which males in high places imitate a male god in heaven." (cited, ibid, p. 189) According to journalist Mark Arnold, in an article on the New Age Movement in the February, 1988 issue of *The Twilight Zone* magazine, "the number of covens is growing rapidly, particularly among suburban and professional women...(in Salem) Laurie Cabot was even a factor in last year's mayoral race." (Unfortunately, Arnold doesn't elaborate as to what sort of factor.)

Descent into Darkness

"All my women are witches and I'm the Devil." So spoke a pathetic little thief, panhandler and "visionary" named Charles Manson who, nearly 20 years ago, led his "family" of followers on one of the most infamous killing sprees in U.S. history. Manson was strictly a do-it-yourself satanist but in California, where he formed his clan, black magic groups make up a large subculture. This is the state where the malodorous Church of Satan started (it too has its *witches*) and where ritual human sacrifice is not unknown. (For an account of a satanic cannibalism in California, see Protestants Hal Lindsey/C. C. Carlson, *Satan is Alive & Well on Planet Earth*, Bantam, 1974, p. 6)

Then there is a hostility towards Christian values. In *The Gospel of the Witches*, first published in 1899, the servant of Diana, if anathematized by a priest, is to reply: "Your God, Jesus and Mary are Devils." (cited, Colin Wilson, *Mysteries*, Putnam, 1978, p. 91) *The Witches' Almanac* suggests, on its lunar calendar for December 25th, that readers "Ignore message." (Elizabeth Pepper/John Wilcocks, Grosset & Dunlap, 1974, p. 35) British Wiccan Midge Worthington boldly predicts that the Craft "will supersede Christianity—certainly before the end of the century, if not before." (Allan, p. 35)

To be sure, not all witches consciously worship the Prince of Darkness. Selena Fox repudiates them and concedes that at least some of those who died in the witch trials were using "negative magickal practices." However, some who wish the name "white witch" give the distinct impression of something else at times. Sybil Leek teaches that "evil may be justified if it is for the greater good of the whole." (cited, John Allan, *Mysteries: A Book of Beliefs*, David C. Cook, 1981, p. 35)

Such diabolism is new only in locale. The drugs, orgies and sacrifices are traceable into the mist-shrouded past. In Scripture we read of the abominable Canaanite worship of Baal-Moloch and his consort Ashtoreth for whom infants were "consecrated" (slain and cremated). (Leviticus 18:21, Judges 2:13 and Jeremias 32:35) Hecate, the Greek goddess of sorcery venerated by *Macbeth*'s hags, was attended by debaucheries and sacrifices at deserted crossroads. (Some modern covens still meet in such settings.) Often, a male in the coven wore the head of a horned beast to portray a god or Satan (another practice still in use). Despite cases of fraud, revenge, ignorance and the like concerning the witch trials, the evil really did exist for, as Hughes writes, "in England, torture was never legally permitted and even here the evidence conforms, very largely, with that of the Continent." (ibid, p. 89) The same writer notes that the evidence is also "borne out by practices of the witches of the West Indies or the Congo today who can hardly be supposed to have derived their practices from literary sources." (pp. 91-92) When we consider the number of missing children, it is chilling to reflect that investigative reporter Maurice Terry has amassed evidence of a nationwide satanic network in his 512-page book, *The Ultimate Evil: An Investigation of America's Most Dangerous Satanic Cult.* (Doubleday, 1987)

"Catholic" Witches

In the course of our conversation Selena Fox mentioned that she knew of "devout Catholics" who take part in witch activities and who see no conflict of interests. One nun, she told me, was a *regular* at the Circle coven until she moved. These revelations will surprise none of our longtime readers who know by now that Conciliar participation in witch and pagan rituals is on the increase.

The high priestess then suggested that I contact Father Mathew Fox, O.P.—presumably no relation—in order to talk with a cleric who is involved with the Craft. Another priest, this time Carmelite Father William McNamara, runs retreats in the U.S. and Canada based on "earthy mysticism." While it isn't known if he, too, is directly connected to witchcraft, his "Spiritual Life Institute" catalog carries one of his cassettes in which he "advocates praying the Our Father backwards." Whatever his motives, Father McNamara is instructing listeners to do what

witches and satanists do to mock God. Donna Steichen has shown rather conclusively (in her excellent 10-page article, "The Goddess Comes to Mundelein College," in the September, 1986 issue of the conservative Conciliar *Fidelity*) that the "woman priest" movement is tied in with the Old Religion and that Chicago's Conciliar cardinal allowed a "goddess" conference to go on at that college.

This occult fascination in the Conciliar Church is certain to continue as it moves further and further from sound Roman Catholic teaching. Thomas Stapleton, a renowned seventeenth century Catholic scholar at Douay College, has written: "Witchcraft is a weed that grows intertwining with heresy; heresy is a weed that grows intertwining with witchcraft."

Cyprian's Spell

Near the beginning of the fourth century there lived in Asia Minor a magician named Cyprian who from his youth was schooled in the black arts. He attempted to seduce through sorcery a Catholic maid, Justina, who rebuffed the attack with a prayer to Our Lady. Seeing that she was "protected by a Power greater than my own," Cyprian was so deeply moved that he was baptized—and later martyred along with the virgin Justina in 304 A.D. by Diocletian. Today, we celebrate the feast of Saints Cyprian and Justina on September 26.

The story of Saint Cyprian reminds us both of the struggle between good and evil and the power of good to conquer hearts. The incompatibility of serving God while practicing witchcraft is evident in Acts (19:17-19, 23-40) where Ephesian converts from Dianic worship burned magic books worth 50,000 silver pieces (almost $36,000) and a riot was nearly caused by idol builders. Certainly we need to communicate such truths to any infected with occultism. Many witches, like Selena Fox, are Christians who have been lured into opposition to God. Some may be deceived into believing that by being white witches they do not grievously offend Christ. (Modernist Christians are culpable in condoning this delusion.) Let us pray that they retreat from that chasm towards which they are drawn before it is too late.

It is part and parcel with the decline of American culture that witch groups are given footing as religious entities. "There is no Church of magic," writes sociologist Emile Durkheim, for a church is "a moral community...But magic lacks any such community." (*The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Free Press, 1965, pp. 60-61) He makes the point that a magician (or witch) has a *clientele*, can practice the craft just as easily *alone* and that any group that may form represents a loose body of adherents that has no true or lasting bond. (ibid) It is difficult to see how such "churches" are guaranteed First Amendment rights. Louise Huebner says "I have no religion." (Godwin, p. 61) When a nation legitimizes witchcraft, it is surely tempting the wrath of Almighty God. †

Pray
the Rosary
Daily

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

The date on the envelope address label indicates the month and year in which the recipient's subscription expires. This is a renewal. At the proper time, a subscription [illegible] enclosed with the newsletter. One may enter a [illegible] at any time, of course, and will then receive the [illegible] newsletter issues. †

Martin Luther King, Jr.

The issue of this newsletter of October 15, 1988 contained a four-page article on the above-named individual by John K. Weiskittel. As a reprint it sold over 2,000 copies. On the 18th of this month, the national holiday to King's honor will again be observed. On the very safe assumption that the American news media will release another propaganda barrage on his behalf, we continue to make available this excellent expose on the *real* Martin Luther King, Jr. It would be a pipe dream to imagine that this one piece could bring about any substantial reversal of the favorable opinion about him held by the generality of Americans. Yet at least a step or two can be made in that direction if our newsletter subscribers will continue to help us to get the article as widely circulated as possible. That there is a national holiday in honor of King is but one more sorrowful example of the depths of moral decadence to which this nation has sunk.

In the article a number of individuals have been designated as Communists. Due to space limitations, the confirming documentation has been omitted. Anyone desiring such documentation may obtain it by writing to the address below.

Additional copies of the article may be purchased at the following prices:

2 copies for $ 1.00 (minimum order)
25 copies for $10.00
50 copies for $15.00

Please order from:

TRADITIONAL CATHOLICS OF AMERICA
P.O. Box 38335
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80937
(Payment must accompany order)

SAINT ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY

Jill Wiesner

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, the "greatest woman of the German Middle Ages," was far different from the modern dignitary. Her greatness consisted of kindness, humility and love of God.

Born in 1207 to Andrew II, King of Hungary, and his wife, Gertrude, Elizabeth was a beautiful, gentle child. Her mother, who was the sister of Saint Hedwig, wasted no time in teaching the Faith to Elizabeth. The child's first words were a prayer. She grew daily in her love for Our Lord and saw opportunities to serve Him in the poor and suffering.

When Elizabeth was four, representatives from Thuringia, a province in central Germany, came to arrange a marriage between her and the eleven-year-old son of Landgrave Hermann I, ruler of Thuringia. In accordance with the custom of the time, Elizabeth was then sent to live in Thuringia. Her new home was the majestic castle of Wartburg atop the heavily-wooded hill above the town of Eisenach. Poets and minne-singers provided constant entertainment for the elegantly-clad lords and ladies of the opulent court of Landgrave Hermann.

Elizabeth, however, had little interest in the lavish lifestyle of the court. Her happiest moments were spent in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. She visited Our Lord in the church whenever she could and, if she found the church closed, she would kiss the lock of the door, her heart inflamed with love.

Kneeling before the crucifix in church on one occasion, she looked up at the crown of thorns on Jesus' head. Removing her own crown, she said, "How can I wear a crown of gold and jewels when our dear Lord wore a crown of thorns?"

The quiet, pious child was resented by the luxury-loving nobles who lost no opportunity to mock her. However, Ludwig, her future husband, always came to her defense and made it known that he gave his approval to her works of mercy. Under his protection and undaunted by the nobles' scornful remarks that she was only fit to be a servant, she aided the orphaned, the widowed and the sick, in all of whom she saw the sufferings of Christ.

In 1221, Ludwig succeeded his father as Landgrave and he and Elizabeth were married. Though attempts were made to convince him that she was unsuitable and should be sent back to Hungary, Ludwig replied that he would rather give up a mountain of gold than to lose her.

Their marriage was a truly happy one. With her husband's assistance and protection, Elizabeth divided her time among penance, prayer and acts of charity. She attended parties whenever he requested that she do so, doing penance beforehand, then going to the party smiling and cheerful for "God does not wish us to have sad faces."

Because of his honesty and prudence Ludwig was often sent by the Emperor Frederick II on errands for the Holy Roman Empire. In the spring of 1226, he represented the Emperor in Italy at the Diet of Cremona. In his absence he left Elizabeth in charge of the government of Thuringia. Floods, famine and disease struck and Elizabeth emptied her own treasury and storehouse of food to aid the victims. Because the path to the castle of Wartburg was so steep (it was called the "knee-smasher"), Elizabeth had a hospital built at the base of the hill so that the weak and ill would be spared the climb. When Ludwig returned from Italy he answered the complaints against her by saying "her charities will bring upon us the divine blessings."

The difficulty of finding enough beds for the sick was such that one night Elizabeth even resorted to giving her own bed to a poor leper. Annoyed, Ludwig threw the covers off the bed. But he received the grace to see as Elizabeth had. Instead of a leper he saw the crucified figure of Christ.

The well-loved story of Ludwig's encounter with Elizabeth on a bitter winter day, when he opened the cloak in which she was carrying provisions for the poor and found instead a profusion of roses, is commemorated in Germany by the name of the briar roses which grow on the slope above Eisenach. The roses are called "Elisabethblumen" (Elizabeth's flowers).

In 1227, Ludwig was called once more to the service of the Emperor, this time on a Crusade to Palestine. On Saint John the Baptist Day he said good-bye to his family, telling Elizabeth that, if anything should happen to him, one of his knights would return with his ring. The ring was returned a few months later. Ludwig had fallen victim to the plague and died at the Italian seaport of Otranto.

Elizabeth did not learn of his death until just after the birth of her third child. When told she cried out, "The world with all its joys is dead to me." Her sorrow was increased by her brother-in-law, Heinrich, who usurped the inheritance of her five-year-old son and drove her and her three young children out of the castle into the winter cold. The people of Eisenach were forbidden to shelter her and so Elizabeth was forced to beg from door to door for food.

Elizabeth's aunt, Matilda, Abbess of Kitzingen, heard of her plight and hurried to Eisenach to bring the little family to her convent. At Kitzingen, Elizabeth received word that her uncle, who was Bishop of Bamberg, had offered her the use of his castle at Pottenstein. Leaving her eldest daughter in the care of the nuns, Elizabeth took her son and baby daughter to Pottenstein. She was distressed to find that her uncle was arranging another marriage for her. During her marriage to Ludwig she had made a vow of continence in the event of his death. She remained true to her vow in spite of her uncle's attempts to persuade her.

continued on page 8

For Truly Traditional Roman Catholics ("Sedevacantists")—

IT'S ALL SO LOGICAL

Fr. Francis E. Fenton

Anyone who has been receiving and reading *The Athanasian* for some time is well aware of its position on various issues relating to Church and state. While it is highly unlikely that all of our subscribers thoroughly agree with every position we take, they all know exactly where we stand on whatever be the subject treated. Although we are at times quite outspoken in our comments on certain matters, we never hear from anyone criticizing or faulting us for it. Our outspokenness is but an indication of the strong convictions and keen feelings we have on whatever the subject may be. Hopefully too, the direct language we sometimes employ may occasionally serve to jolt one or another reader out of his lethargy and passivity. In any case, *The Athanasian* makes no apologies for the uncompromising stand it takes on a number of issues of the day. Nor will we ever refrain from stating our convictions on any subject for fear that some may be antagonized or offended by them. If something is true and circumstances justify its being said, then it is hardly to one's credit to remain silent because certain unpleasant consequences may result.

In my dealings and contacts with traditional Roman Catholics around the country, one of the more frequent comments I hear is that they are confused (some even tempted to despair) by the widespread and seemingly endless conflict and disunity that exist in the ranks of traditional Catholicism. This conflict and disunity result from the diversity of positions taken by various groups claiming to be traditional Catholics and presumably attempting to preserve the totality of the Faith in the face of the unprecedented turmoil and chaos the Church is currently undergoing. The existence of these divergent groups and their failure to unite over the years is certainly one of the causes of the confusion in the minds of the (broadly termed) traditional Catholics to whom I refer. Nor, I submit, is any substantial unity possible among these groups so long as each maintains its current stand.

But the primary and basic cause for so much of the conflict and disunity and resulting confusion in traditional Catholicism is, of course, the nature of the Conciliar Church and the identity of its head, John Paul II. As disheartened as I have always been with the pathetic human state of the Church for so many years now and as disturbed as I am with the deplorable factions and divisions among the various self-styled traditional movements, I assuredly am not confused. To me there is no question in the world but that the Conciliar Church is not the Roman Catholic Church and John Paul II is not a valid pope. That being my absolute conviction, all else falls into line—and I think and act accordingly. The enemies of the true Church are in working control of the Conciliar establishment and John Paul II (I have not the slightest doubt) is not only well aware of this but is a conscious, willful collaborator with those enemies. (By the way, can any informed individual honestly deny the pro-Communism of many of the American Conciliar Church bishops? I wonder how many of them are Freemasons.)

And so, either the Conciliar Church is the one true Church or it is not; either John Paul II is a legitimate pontiff or he is not. If, then, a priest or layman, no matter how orthodox or traditional he may otherwise be, acknowledges John Paul II as a valid pope and the Conciliar Church as the true Church, it follows that that priest or layman is a member of the Conciliar Church. How could it be otherwise? Such being the case, those Roman Catholics who believe that the Chair of Peter is currently vacant ("sedevacantists") and that the Conciliar Church is not Catholic should not attend the Masses of those priests nor, apart from exceptional situations, receive the Sacraments from them. I do not mean to imply here, however, that traditional Catholic laymen who are convinced "sedevacantists" may attend the Masses of priests *solely* because those priests have the same convictions on this particular subject. There may well be other reasons why the Masses of such priests should be shunned.

On the other hand, those Conciliar Church "traditional" Catholics referred to above should not attend the Masses of nor—again, apart from exceptional situations—receive the Sacraments from a priest such as me who believes that the Conciliar Church is not the Roman Catholic Church and that John Paul II is a non-pope. And why should this be? For the very simple reason that I totally repudiate the Conciliar Church. Consequently, the "traditional" members of that Church who would, for example, attend one of my Masses would be attending the Mass of a priest who is not a member of their Church. And even though, in these days of rampant false ecumenism, many Conciliar Church bishops and priests would tell such people that this was all right, I know—and they should know—that it is *not* all right. Since the Conciliar Church "traditionalists" of whom I am writing believe that that Church is the real thing, they should act accordingly. (I have deliberately employed the first personal pronoun in this paragraph. While I know that there are a number of very traditional priests who more or less completely share my thinking relating to the Church situation, I do not believe some of them would draw some of the conclusions I do on this specific matter. Hence, on it I express only my personal conviction.)

Again, the bottom line in all of the confusion that plagues the ranks of traditional Catholicism is the two-fold question: What is John Paul II and what is the Conciliar Church? Yes, at some future time the Roman Catholic Church will, please God, issue a definitive answer to this, an answer which all authentic Roman Catholics will readily accept. But, in the meantime, we simply must take a public stand one way or the other—an intelligent stand, to be sure, based on evidence, fact, reality. The record of the Conciliar Church and John Paul II speaks for itself and, to me, it contradicts logic and common sense to hold that we should refrain from openly proclaiming the obvious. And, I contend, until this is done, until the lines are clearly

drawn between those who believe the Conciliar Church to be the true Church and those who do not, and between those who believe John Paul II to be a valid pope and those who do not; until those truly traditional Roman Catholics who are convinced that John Paul II is an impostor pope and that his Conciliar Church is a counterfeit of the one true Church—and talk and act fully in accord with those convictions—until this is done, authentic traditional Catholicism, I maintain, is not confronting the adversary with the *totality of opposition* which the critical situation demands. The enemies of the Roman Catholic Church have, from a human perspective, made colossal strides in their hell-bent efforts to destroy it. Among those in the top echelon of those enemies is the actor supreme, John Paul II. Strong words, yes, but I make no apologies for them. On this paramount issue involving the Church the battle lines have yet to be clearly drawn. How long more before they are?†

THE UNITED NATIONS

Any honorable individual who is well-informed on current events is very much aware of how exceedingly evil an organization the United Nations is. So also, any such person who is likewise convinced that John Paul II is something else than what he appears and claims to be will not be at all surprised to hear that (on September 19, 1987, in Detroit, Michigan) "His Holiness" urged governments "to trust the United Nations." It really all adds up, doesn't it?

"Saint Elizabeth" continued from page 6

Early in 1228, Ludwig's knights returned from the Crusade, bringing his body home for burial. They restored Elizabeth to Wartburg castle and returned to her the revenues of her castle at Marburg. With her children now provided for, Elizabeth resolved to formally renounce the world. On Good Friday, 1228, she took the habit of the Third Order of Saint Francis. She lived in poverty in a little cabin near Marburg and humbly obeyed the direction of her extremely strict confessor. The income which she received from her estate at Marburg was used entirely for works of mercy, among which was the Franciscan hospital which she built and where she spent most of her time caring for the sick, devoting special care to those afflicted with loathsome diseases.

Though her health began to deteriorate, she did not spare herself. She continued to work until the day of her death, spinning or carding wool when she was too weak to do anything else. In late November of 1231, Elizabeth died at the age of twenty-four.

Four years later, on the Feast of Pentecost, 1235, Elizabeth of Hungary was canonized by Pope Gregory IX. The beautiful Gothic Church of St. Elizabeth at Marburg, which was built to contain her relics, became the object of numerous pilgrimages. Though the Protestant Landgrave of Hesse removed her relics from the church in 1539 in an attempt to end the pilgrimages, "dear Saint Elizabeth" is still venerated throughout Germany.

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary was so filled with love for God that she sought only to please Him in everything that she did. May her intercession enable us "to think little of worldly prosperity and to be ever gladdened by heavenly consolation." (Collect from the Mass of November 19, Feast of Saint Elizabeth.)†

THE ATHANASIAN

Published by Traditional Catholics of America

Eight issues a year: (Jan. 15, Mar. 1, Apr. 15, June 1, July 15, Sept. 1, Oct. 15, Dec. 1)
Subscriptions: $ 8.00 per year (via First Class Mail) for the USA, Canada and Mexico; $12.00 per year (via Air Mail) for all other countries
Additional copies: single copy - $1.00; 10 copies - $8.00; 40 or more to same address - $.70 each
Mailing address: P.O. Box 38335, Colorado Springs, CO 80937
Telephone: (303) 636-1575

Manuscripts sent to us for possible publication in *The Athanasian* should be typewritten, double-spaced and no more than seven pages in length. If not accepted, they will be returned to the sender.

No articles from this newsletter may be reproduced either in whole or in part without the written permission of the TCA.