

St. Therese Catholic Church

St. Charles Borromeo
Fr. Leonard Andrie

April 2, 2020

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St. Therese Parish

- A friend and I traveled to Milan in 2012.
- We visited the Duomo (magnificent!).
- St. Charles Borromeo is buried in the crypt.

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<https://gladiatorstours.com/sandbox/activities/milano-tours/duomo-milan-cathedral-tour/>

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St. Therese Parish

- Construction began in 1386 and was consecrated in 1418. It took six centuries to complete.
- Fifth Largest cathedral in the world
- Napoleon finished the façade.
- 3,400 statues, 135 gargoyles, 700 figures – most statues of any building in the world
- Houses one of the nails of Jesus' crucifixion in the apse
- Work is always being done!



<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/duomo-milan-interior-joan-carroll.html>

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St. Charles Borromeo began tradition in 1576 during an epidemic of the bubonic plague.

He organized a procession from the Duomo cathedral to the church of San Celso to pray for the end of the disease.

Every year the Archbishop of Milan goes up in the basket on September 13th to bring down two precious relics.



<https://www.hellomilano.it/en/the-nivola-and-the-holy-nail/>

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One of the nails used during the crucifixion and a fragment of the true Cross

Emperor Constantine received them as a gift from his mother Helena

The archbishop takes the glass shrine down and places it on the altar



<https://www.hellomilano.it/en/the-nivola-and-the-holy-nail/>

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Tomb of St. Charles Borromeo

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Body of St. Charles Borromeo



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/39412781@N00/35464109721>

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- Cardinal Archbishop of Milan
- Painting above tomb
- Most authentic painting of St. Charles Borromeo



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- Period of 1300 – 1499
 - Dark time for the Church as it had weak leaders and period of great confusion.
 - Popes preoccupied with secular power instead of universal leader of the Church
 - In 1309, pope moved to Avignon where they lived for 70 years (lost respect).
 - Avignon Papacy (1309 – 1376) is also known as the Babylon Captivity

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- Period of 1300 – 1499
 - Rise of disease of black death or the bubonic plague (fleas on black rats)
 - Most devastating pandemic recorded in human history from 1347 to 1351.
 - Killed half of its victims (90% in some areas)
 - Believed it started in China in 1330s and made its way to Europe in the 1340s.

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- Period of 1300 – 1499
 - Estimated that 23.8 million people died or 31% of the population (50% in England)
 - One third of the college of cardinals died
 - Robbed Church of the good clergy as they were out ministering to the sick
 - Cream of the crop was not left
 - Lots of abuse crept into the Church

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Renaissance

- Renaissance (French: Rebirth) begins in Florence in the 14th - 16th centuries and spreads all over Europe.
- New interest in study of classical texts in Greece and Rome. New study of Greek philosophy (Plato) and literature.
- Focus on how to live well on this earth

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Renaissance

- Shift in focus on the human person.
- Revival in culture, politics, science, literature, art, and architecture.
- Michelangelo (1475-1564), Raphael (1483-1520), Leonardo de Vinci (1452-1519), and Titian (1490-1576)

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- Church was in a poor state because of weak leadership.
- Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517) tried to address ecclesiastical abuses
 - Concubinage, simony, church property issues, absenteeism, selling of indulgences (remission of temporal sin)

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Absenteeism

- Bishops oftentimes lived in different diocese and received multiple collections
- Milan was without an archbishop for 80 years
- St. Charles Borromeo was the first to live in Milan

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Breaking up of Christendom

- Martin Luther nails 95 thesis to the Church door in Wittenberg (1517) denouncing indulgences and the authority of the pope
- Excommunicated in 1521; burned papal bull
- Church was very slow to respond

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- Holy Spirit calls Church to gather in a council, reflect, and renew
- Council of Trent (1545 – 1563);
 - Reform of three “d’s”
 - Doctrine (teaching)
 - Devotion (worship)
 - Discipline (morality)



Image: Alberto Masnovo

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- All reforms must be implemented!
1. Council of Trent: 1545 – 1563
 2. Society of Jesus (Jesuits)
 3. Holy Spirit raises up saints!
 - Mystics
 - Missionaries
 - Martyrs

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- Mystics (Spain)
 - St. Teresa of Avila
 - St. John of the Cross
- Missionaries
 - St. Charles Borromeo (Milan)
 - St. Philip Neri (Rome)
 - St. Francis de Sales (Geneva)
 - St. Peter Canisius (Germany)
 - St. Francis Xavier (India)



<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Teresa-of-Avila>

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- Born on October 2, 1538 of a noble family just outside of Milan
- Third of six children
- Age of 12, dedicated himself to serving the life of the Church
- Painting by Wolfgang Sauber



<https://nobility.org/2013/11/04/st-charles-borromeo/>

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- He was shy, a little awkward, and spoke with a stammer.
- His mother died when he was about 11 (1547).
- His father died when he was quite young as well (1554).



<https://nobility.org/2013/11/04/st-charles-borromeo/>

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- He was a good student and impressed his teachers.
- He earned a doctorate in canon and civil law in 1559.
- He was the nephew of a cardinal, who became Pope Pius IV (1559).



<https://nobility.org/2013/11/04/st-charles-borromeo/>

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- St. Charles' uncle made him cardinal-deacon and administrator of the Archdiocese of Milan.
- It's said that he worked 20 hours each day. Milan was a huge diocese with 800 parishes. It was the largest diocese in the Church and corruption was rampant.
- He was surrounded by the trapping of wealth. He had 200 servants and hosted grand parties.
- However, none of this interested him. Christ alone captured his heart.

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- During his time of administrator in Milan, his older brother died (1562) and he decided to become a priest.
- He was ordained at the age of 25 on September 4, 1563.
- Soon thereafter he was consecrated bishop of Milan on December 7, 1563. He became Archbishop of Milan in May 12, 1564 (26 years old).

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- St. Charles hears about the Council of Trent and the difficult work of reform.
- Almost single-handedly for keeping the Council from breaking up.
- Pope Pius IV and St. Charles set out to implement the reforms of Trent.

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- This picture is purely for your enjoyment.
- It has nothing to do with the Renaissance or the renewal needed for the Church in the 16th century.
- However, Goldy has agreed to help us in our own time with the challenges that we face.
- Thank you Goldy!



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• Reforms of Trent

- A new catechism (1566) Seminaries to educate the clergy
- Bishops must live in their own diocese.
- Uniformity of the liturgy (missal)
- Eradicate the sale of indulgences



- 150 years to implement reforms

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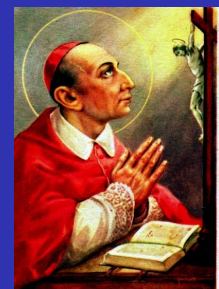
• Reforming the Clergy

- 3,000 clergy and 800,000 people in Milan. Both clergy and laity drifted from Church teaching. Monasteries were "full of disorder."
- He needed a method. Start small and work out from there. He began with his own life.
- He lived as a monk in palace.

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- He had a picture of St. Thomas More in his room
- Made priests who lived in his house go to confession once per week
- Read the breviary and did works of service
- Visited each of 800 parishes at least twice in 18 years



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- He believed many abuses crept in because from ignorant clergy.
- He established seminaries, colleges, and communities for the education of candidates for holy orders.
- Naturally, some resisted his reforms. Some members of Brothers of Humility formed a conspiracy against his life and tried to shoot him.

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- In 1576, a famine struck Milan followed by a plague that lasted for a year and a half.
- At its height, 100 people died per day and about 17,000 people in Milan died. It killed 50,000 in Venice, almost a third of its population.
- The governor and nobility of the city fled. Archbishop Borromeo remained. He became a light for the people.

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- St. Charles personally visited plague-stricken houses.
- He walked barefoot with rope around his neck.
- One time bearing in his hand the relic of the Holy Nail.



<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/msgr-pope/coronavirus>

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- After spending own money for the poor, he went into deep debt.
- He tried to feed 60,000 to 70,000 people per day.
- He established hospitals and hospices for victims.



<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/FatherCushhow-st-charles-borromeo-can-help-form-priests-today>

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Life of St. Charles Borromeo

- "He wore a purple vestment in token of penitence.... Round his neck he bore a rope like the halter of a condemned criminal; in his hand he carried a crucifix (preserved to this day in the sacristy of the cathedral) on which he kept his eyes fixed throughout the whole of the way, like a malefactor led forth to execution."

~Guissano, John Peter. *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*. (London: Aeterna Press, 2015), 392.

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Life of St. Charles Borromeo

- "On this occasion also he himself carried the whole time of the procession the relic of the Holy Nail of the Passion of our Lord, taken from its shrine in the cathedral and borne on a great wooden cross, enclosed in a crystal case....
- On their return to the cathedral he laid the Holy Nail on the high altar, and began the devotion of the forty hours, with a meditation every hour on some mystery of the Passion, and throughout the whole time by a multitude of the clergy and people taking the watching in turn."

~Guissano, John Peter. *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*. (London: Aeterna Press, 2015). 395 - 396.

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Life of St. Charles Borromeo

- “Next, in order to sanctify the time, he directed that every one should hear Mass devoutly every day; and to give effect to this order, he erected altars at the crossways and conspicuous places, where Mass was said daily, so that all could assist from their windows.”

~Guissano, John Peter. *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*. (London: Aeterna Press, 2015), 419.

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Life of St. Charles Borromeo

- “In the same way, he arranged confessions to be heard, sending priests round at stated times from house to house, the confessor sitting on the doorstep outside, and the penitent kneeling within, the door serving as a barrier.”

~Guissano, John Peter. *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*. (London: Aeterna Press, 2015), 419.

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Life of St. Charles Borromeo

- “The parish priest went around with the Blessed Sacrament on Sundays and gave Holy Communion on the doorsteps to all, as if they had been cloistered religious.”

~Guissano, John Peter. *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*. (London: Aeterna Press, 2015), 419.

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- There is a story that St. Charles enjoyed playing billiards.
- When asked what he would do if he only had 15 more minutes to live, he responded, “Keep playing billiards.”
- **Key:** St. Charles lived his life in such a way that he wouldn't make any changes if he knew that he only had a short time to live.
- A saint is one who can stand at the eternal gates and say, “Hello, I am home.” ~Fr. George Rutler

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- St. Charles Borromeo always used to say:

“You will not be able to care for the souls of others if you let your own soul perish. In the end you will no longer do anything even for others. You must always have time for being with God.”

Charles Borromeo, quoted in Benedict XVI, Meeting with the Clergy of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone, August 6, 2008.

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- Exhausted from work, St. Charles became ill with a fever. He had utterly spent himself for his people.
- When it was obvious he was going to die, he was given the last sacraments of the Church. He died on November 4, 1584. He was 46 years old.
- “The angels were not weeping, but singing him to his place of rest.”

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- He was beatified on May 12, 1602 by Pope Paul V.
- He was canonized by the same pope on November 1, 1610.
- His feast day is November 4. He is often depicted wearing his vestments, barefoot, carrying the cross with a rope around his neck and blessing others.

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<https://www.learnreligions.com/saint-charles-borromeo-novena-542537>

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- Every 500 years (crisis)
 - Some historians have noted that the Church goes through a major crisis every 500 years.
 - It is not a prophecy, but simply a noticeable pattern.

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- Around 500 year mark
 - Church was being crushed under the implosion of the corrupt Roman Empire and onslaught of barbarian invasions.
 - Beginning of the Dark Ages. Church struggled to survive (monasteries).

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- Around 1,000 year mark
 - Papacy had been deeply corrupted by Italian nobles in the previous century
 - Cistercian monks helped pull Church out of mire in 11th and 12 centuries.

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- Around 1,500 year mark
 - Protestant Reformation began in 1517 by Martin Luther.
 - Bad popes and corrupt clergy helped lay the groundwork for this painful break from the Church.

Source: <https://www.ncregister.com/blog/benjamin-wiker/every-500-years-the-church-faces-a-terrible-crisis-is-this-the-worst-of-the>

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- Around 2,000 year mark
 - Corruption in the priesthood with sexual immorality, including pedophilia scandals in 2002. Hit local church in 2013.
 - Bishop's scandal in 2018 with Theodore McCarrick and others living immoral lifestyles or ignoring the actions of immoral priests.

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St. Therese Parish

- Around 2,000 year mark
 - Mass exodus of the faithful and three fourths of the baptized no longer regularly practicing the sacraments.
 - Young people leaving the Church in extremely high percentages.

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- Around 2,000 year mark
 - Sexual immorality and spiritual crisis has, in turn, led to a financial crisis with a good number of dioceses and parishes filing for bankruptcy.
 - Pandemic sweeping across the world has resulted in a closing of churches and the remaining faithful without the sacraments.

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St. Therese Parish

- What is needed?
 - **Doctrine** (teaching): St. Charles founded seminaries, implemented catechism and teaching
 - **Devotion** (worship): St. Charles implemented a revised missal, uniformity of liturgy, and renewed zeal for worship
 - **Discipline** (morality): St. Charles reformed clergy (own example), taught and served the faithful

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St. Therese Parish

- What is needed?
 - New saints! We need *everyday heroes!*
 - Moms, dads, grandpas, grandmas, children (St. Dominic Savio), teachers, students, doctors, nurses, law enforcement officers, cleaners, caregivers, volunteers, priests, religious men and women, dedicated single people, husbands and wives, etc.

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Summary

- The life of every saint is filled with personal challenges and hardships in his or her present time.
- Yet, every saint remains radically open to God's grace allowing our Lord to use him or her in extraordinary ways to make Christ known and loved.
- In short, what is needed? A fresh batch of saints who, like St. Charles Borromeo, are ready to say "yes" to all that the Lord asks of them to renew the Church and win souls for Christ!

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St. Therese Parish

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, you have generously made known to human beings the mysteries of your life through Jesus Christ your Son in the Holy Spirit.

Enlighten my mind to know these mysteries which your Church treasures and teaches.

Move my heart to love them and my will to live in accord with them.

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St. Therese Parish

Closing Prayer

Give me the ability to teach this Faith to others without pride, without ostentation, and without personal gain.

Let me realize that I am simply your instrument for bringing others to the knowledge of the wonderful things you have done for all your creatures.

Help me to be faithful to this task that you have entrusted to me. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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