

On The Cover for 3rd Sunday of Easter ***By Steven N. Guillotte***

Peter said to the people: "...The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead; of this we are witnesses. Now I know, brothers, that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did..." (Acts 3:12,16,17)

When St. Peter addresses the people of Israel in the outer court of the Temple telling them that he knows that they "acted out of ignorance" in crucifying Jesus, Peter appears to be conceding that the people were unaware that Jesus was God or even the Messiah (Acts 3:18). Yet, even if they were unaware or "acted out of ignorance" does this mean that the people were still not culpable? After all, can one be deemed blameless who even out of ignorance turns an innocent person over to lawless men (Acts 2:23). However Peter is not present in the Temple as judge, but as healer and confessor. He is there as an instrument of forgiveness to all who repent of their ignorance (Acts 3:19).

In moral philosophy, ignorance means lacking knowledge that ought to be present. Hence, the person who should know the ethical truth of something for example, the truth that "all men are made in the image of God" but who disregards this truth in favor of prejudice could fairly be deemed "ignorant" because of any unconscious or even conscious, lazy disregard of this invincible truth.

Ignorance can be a type of moral laziness instigated by the grave sin of sloth. Sloth is particularly insidious because it is the unwillingness of the soul to achieve some good work. This good work could be helping out a stranger, saying a prayer, or being attentive to the truth in a sound, moral argument. Lacking knowledge due to the ignoring of truth is what gets men crucified and babies aborted, while it only adds to the prevalence of unhappy and immoral lifestyles.

In order to encourage Catholics to confront ignorance whenever they encounter it, we place on our bulletin cover for this 3rd Sunday of Lent a work by the great Flemish Baroque master, Peter Paul Rubens entitled *The Triumph of the Church Over Ignorance* (1625). Rubens was a Counter-Reformation painter who painted many images in reverence of the Holy Eucharist and in opposition to the increasingly willful and ignorant religious opinions of his time.

Because of its rectangular configuration, we are only able to show the right half of this work which is considered a religious allegory or a symbolic work of religious meaning. The Church is depicted here as a glorious bride surrounded and crowned by angels. The entire scene is framed by various lush crops to display the Church's fruitfulness for God. At middle-right two blind men representing worldly ignorance are led forward by the lamplight of an angel. Two other figures barbarism and paganism (the latter with the hair of snakes like Medusa) fall under the wheels of the Church, while in the lower-left corner of the scene a serpent wraps itself around a globe representing Satan's encirclement of the earth. Yet the Church is not held back. It moves forward in faith led by the Blessed Sacrament.

It is hard to see how the front against ignorance will hold firm without the faith, mercy, and reason of the Church. Divine revelation and the natural law must be our sturdy wheels if the world is not to bog down in this new faithless and irrational "progressiveness", which is nothing else than a burgeoning barbarism and a post-modern paganism.