

## Our Lady Queen of Europe

August 24, 2017

Dear Parishioners,

Little known amongst the faithful is the fact that after Fatima, Our Lady manifested herself again, in Belgium, between the years 1932 and 1933. These are the great apparitions of Beauraing and Banneux. The former involved a group of 5 children and 33 apparitions. The latter one child and 8 apparitions. They both have received ecclesiastical approbation and have become major pilgrimage destinations.

We had two interesting encounters there. The first was a Syrian Orthodox family that had emigrated to Belgium. You can imagine what they had to tell us. But the second was a Muslim family from Iran, who had come to Banneux to venerate Our Lady. Both families showed us great respect as priests, leaving us wondering about the workings of God's Providence.

At Banneux there was a particularly moving message. The priest, appropriately skeptical, had asked the visionary for a sign from the "Lady." The response was this message from Mary to the priest: "*Croyez en moi, et je crois en vous*" ("*Believe in me and I shall believe in you*").

This is a very powerful statement and for each of us there is a message, viz., if we turn to Our Lady, if we turn to Heaven, there will be a response. Heaven does not give up on us, and so it is imperative that we do not give up on Heaven! Words of encouragement, my dear parishioners. We must persevere to the very end! There is a host of angels and saints praying for us ever to turn back to the truth, to God, to Heaven. There is still time to be a saint!

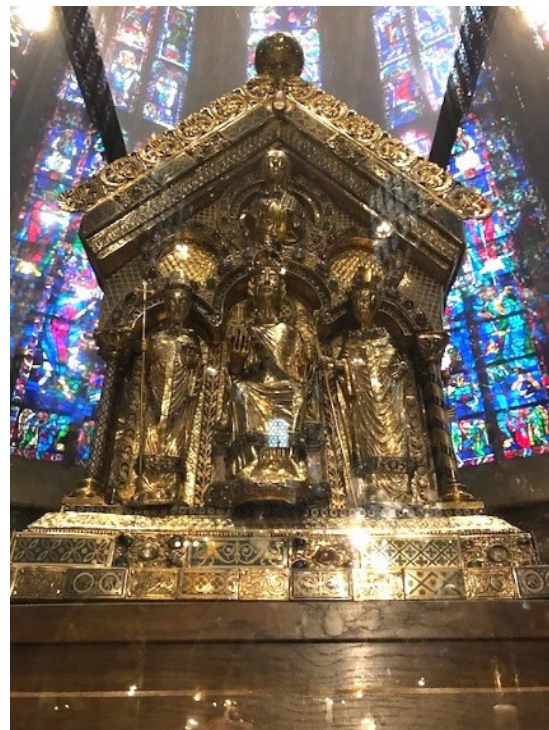
From Belgium I went to the great basilica of Our Lady in Maastricht, Netherlands. This is the southernmost part of that country, in the province of Limburg. It is the most Catholic city in the Netherlands. Within the basilica is an ancient, venerated image of Our Lady, *Stella Matutina* (Morning Star). I was greatly moved at multitude of Dutchmen crowding around her shrine which was filled with burning votive candles representing their fervent prayers.

There was one family in particular that caught our attention. It was a young Dutch mother and father with five little children, with exceedingly bright blond hair that could be used to illuminate the church. They were kneeling in prayer before the Morning Star. We could discern them whispering the *Ave* in their language (which we were told is a rather different from the King's Dutch). How encouraging to meet such a fervent Catholic family full of hope for the future of the Faith in a nation that has been hit very hard by the wave of secularization. There is always hope and we must not forget! The father even told us, as if by way of prophesying the number of children he hoped God would send them for the Cause of Christ in the Netherlands, "*Our Lord Himself began with only 12...*"

For good measure we went to Aachen Cathedral where one can venerate the bones of Charlemagne, the great 9<sup>th</sup> Century defender of the True Faith.

Nearby in Germany there is a great shrine of Our Lady at the quiet but perfectly beautiful village of Kevelaer. Despite what everyone seems to think in America, most Germans do not speak English, and this can cause issues. I tried to order a bratwurst for lunch and ended up with a very strange ham spread sandwich with two slices of bread that didn't match in size. I went to the *Bella Napoli Ristorante* that evening to cancel out this latest culinary blooper. But I digress.

The shrine, yes, of course. It is home to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century image of Our Lady, *Consolatrix Afflictorum* (Consolation of the Afflicted). How encouraging once again to see the multitudes, this time German, praying before her lovely image. I remembered you here as well, especially those who are suffering in any way.



The relics of Charlemagne, Aachen, Germany

May God keep you,

Father de Rosa