

March 6, 2023

Good Morning!

1. Today's Readings: [Monday of the Second Week in Lent | USCCB](#)

2. The RE Corner with Jan Heithaus: As we move forward into the 700's, we encounter our next 3 popes: John VII, Sisinnius and Constantine. John is noted for his dedication to Mary, Sisinnius for his short 3-week papacy and Constantine for his battling Monotheism which again tried to rear its ugly head, among other things.

3. Meditation of the Day:

~"If people would do for God what they do for the world, my dear friends, what a great number of Christians would go to heaven!

If you, dear children, had to pass three or four hours praying in a church, the same way you pass them at a dance or in a nightclub, how heavily the time would press upon you! If you had to go to a great many different places in order to hear a sermon, the same way you go for your pastimes or to satisfy your avarice and greed, what pretexts there would be, and how many detours would be taken to avoid going at all! But nothing, it seems, is too much trouble when done for the world.

What's more, people aren't afraid of losing either God or their souls or heaven. It was with good reason, my dear people, that Jesus Christ said the children of this world are zealous in serving their master, the world, than the children of light are in serving theirs, who is God.

To our shame, we must admit that people fear neither expense, nor even going into debt, when it's a matter of satisfying their pleasures. But if some poor person asks them for help, they have nothing at all. This is true of so many: They have everything for the world and nothing at all for God because to them, the world is everything and God is nothing." *St. John Vianney, Sermons*

*Our Prayer: Lord God, give me a heart so pleased with you, so delighted to spend time with you, that the allure of lesser pleasures will fade in comparison.*

***St. Joseph, Pray for Us!***

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## Popes of the Early 700's

### 86. John VII (705-07)

The year of Pope John VII's birth is unknown. Few particulars of his life remain. Like many other popes during the period of Byzantine influence in Rome, John was a Greek. Sprung from a distinguished family, he was the son of Blatta and Plato. The latter carried out various restorations in the imperial palace on the Palatine hill in Rome, and, for the sake, perhaps, of living where once his parents had lived, John after he had become pope constructed a palace (*episcopium*) near the church of Sancta Maria Antiqua. Before his elevation, John was the rector of the papal patrimony on the Appian way. It was in that capacity that he erected a memorial "with a broken heart to a most loving and incomparable mother, and to the kindest of fathers". One of the churches which John beautified or restored during his pontificate was the afore-mentioned church of Sancta Maria Antiqua. "He adorned with frescoes the basilica of the Holy Mother of God and gave it a new ambo. When the remains of this church were brought to light in 1900, among the many figures found upon its walls, one with a square nimbus is supposed to represent John himself. There was also then discovered the base of his ambo. It bore upon it inscriptions which proclaimed him to be "the servant of Mary". John also erected a chapel to Our Lady in St. Peter's. When this oratory was destroyed, some of his mosaics were preserved, and may be seen in the Roman Church of Sancta Maria in Cosmedin and in other places. Though John was a man of learning and eloquence, and though he was remarkable for his filial affection and piety, he was of a timorous disposition. Hence, when the fierce Emperor Justinian II sent him the decrees of the Quinisext Council, "in which were many articles against the See of Rome", with a request that he would set forth what he approved in them, John simply returned them, as though there were nothing to condemn in them. He received back from the Lombard King Aripert II the papal patrimonies in the Cottian Alps, which the Lombards had confiscated. John is credited with having prevailed upon the Anglo-Saxon clergy resident in Rome to renounce their secular style of dress, and with having written to those in England bidding them follow this example. John died in the palace he had built near the Palatine and was buried in the oratory he had erected in St. Peter's.

*Source: newadvent.org*

### **87. Sisinnius (708)**

The date of Pope Sisinnius' birth is unknown. The successor of John VII, he was consecrated probably January 15, 708, and died after a brief pontificate of about three weeks; he was buried in St. Peter's. He was a Syrian by birth and the son of one John. Although he was so afflicted with gout that he was unable even to feed himself, he is nevertheless said to have been a man of strong character, and to have been able to take thought for the good of the city. He gave orders to prepare lime to repair the walls of Rome, and before he died consecrated a bishop for Corsica.

*Source: catholic.com*

### **88. Constantine (708-15)**

Constantine was a Syrian, the son of John, and "a remarkably affable man". The first half of his reign was marked by a cruel famine in Rome, the second by an extraordinary abundance. For some time, he had trouble with Felix, Archbishop of Ravenna, whom he had himself consecrated. Relying on the secular power, the new bishop refused to offer the pope due obedience. It was only after he had tasted dire misfortune that Felix submitted. Constantine received as pilgrims two Anglo-Saxon kings, Coenred of Mercia and Offa of the East Saxons. They both received the tonsure in Rome and embraced the monastic life. St. Egwin, Bishop of Worcester, went to Rome along with them and obtained from the pope various privileges for his monastery of Evesham. The extant documents regarding this monastery which bear this pope's name are all spurious. But his privilege for the monasteries of Bermondsey and Woking may be genuine.

In 692 the Emperor Justinian II assembled the so-called Quinisext or Trullan Council. At this assembly, which was attended only by Greek bishops, 102 canons were passed, many of which established customs opposed to those of Rome. By canon xiii the celibacy of the Greek secular clergy became a thing of the past; and by canon xxxvi a further step was taken in the direction of rendering the Patriarch of Constantinople quite independent of the Holy See. Justinian made every effort to secure the adhesion of the popes to these decrees. But one after another they all refused. At length he sent an order to Constantine to repair to Constantinople. Leaving behind him, according to the custom at the time, the archpriest, the archdeacon, and the *Primicerius*, or chief of the notaries, to govern the Church in his absence, he set sail for the East (709) with a number of bishops

and clergy. Wherever his vessel touched, he was, by Justinian's orders, received with as much honor as the emperor himself. He entered Constantinople in triumph, and at Justinian's request crossed over to Nicomedia, where he was then residing. Strange to say, this cruel prince received the pope with the greatest honor, prostrating himself before him and kissing his feet. After receiving Holy Communion at the hands of the pope, he renewed all the privileges of the Roman Church. Exactly what passed between them on the subject of the Quinisext Council is not known. It would appear, however, that Constantine approved those canons which were not opposed to the true Faith or to sound morals, and that with this qualified approval of his council the emperor was content.

Soon after Constantine's return to Rome (October, 711), Justinian II was dethroned by Philippicus Bardanes. The new emperor strove to revive Monothelism and sent a letter to the pope which the latter caused to be examined in a synod and condemned. Further, as the emperor burnt the Acts of the Sixth General Council, restored to the diptychs the names which that council had caused to be erased, re-erected their images, and removed the representation of the council which was hanging in front of the palace, the pope and the people of Rome placed in the portico of St. Peter's a series of representations of the six general councils, and refused to place the new emperor's name on their charters or their money. They also declined to place his statue, according to custom, in the official chapel of St. Caesarius on the Palatine, or to pray for him in the Canon of the Mass. To punish the Romans for these daring measures, a new duke was sent to Rome, and they would no doubt have had much to suffer but for the opportune deposition of Philippicus by the orthodox Anastasius. The new emperor made haste to dispatch to Rome, through the Exarch Scholasticus, a letter in which he professed his orthodoxy and his adherence to the Sixth General Council, which had condemned Monothelism. Constantine also received a letter from John, the Patriarch of Constantinople, acknowledging that the "apostolical pre-eminence of the Pope is to the whole Church, what the head is to the body", and that "according to the canons he is the head of the Christian priesthood". John assured the pope that, while cooperating with the Emperor Philippicus, he had always been orthodox at heart, and that the decree, drawn up at the council in which the heretical emperor had hoped to reestablish Monothelism (712), was really orthodox in sense, although not apparently so in words.

Among other distinguished men who came to Rome in the days of Constantine was Benedict, Archbishop of Milan. He came not only to pray at the shrines of the Apostles, for he was a man of such remarkable holiness that he was distinguished for it in all Italy, but also to discuss with the pope as to whose immediate jurisdiction belonged the Church of Pavia. At one time, certainly in the fifth century, the bishops of Pavia were subject to the bishops of Milan and were consecrated by them. For some reason, perhaps because the Lombards made Pavia their capital, its bishops had ceased to be dependent on those of Milan, and had become directly subject to the popes. Accordingly, when it had been proved to Benedict that for some long time at least they had been consecrated at Rome, he definitely surrendered his claim to jurisdiction over them. The visit of a pope to a city at any distance from Rome being so comparatively rare, the people of several places at which Constantine touched in his journey to and from Constantinople were only too pleased to be able to avail themselves of the opportunity of getting him to consecrate a bishop for them. It is on record that he consecrated twelve in this way, and, at the customary times and places, no less than sixty-four.

*Source: catholic.com*