A fresco painting from the old church in Skive, Denmark dated 1522. Ansgar, to the left, holds out his fingers to teach. To the right is Rimbert, his successor as bishop of Hamburg-Bremen and the author of the Vita Anskarii from which the following pages are excerpted. Quite often St. Ansgar is shown with a book or the model of a church, as he was the first bishop of Hamburg-Bremen.

Photograph courtesy of National Museum Copenhagen, Denmark

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Ansgar In Scandinavia

Charlemagne (c.742-814) had as a long time concern the Christianizing of the lands lying to the north of his realm. However, little had been done before his death in relation to the area we call Scandinavia. This was the era of the Vikings; their savage incursions into other areas of Europe were a common concern. Certainly Charlemagne wanted to pacify these regions by religion and alliances, but he also had a religious concern which is often hard to separate from his political aims. His son, Lewis, succeeded him and is the first emperor we meet in the life of Ansgar. As his father had given primary attention to the Frisians, it was left to him to look further north to Scandinavia.

Ansgar was born in Flanders in 801. His mother died while he was still a boy and he was sent to school at the Benedictine monastery of Corbie. In 823 he was sent to the new monastery of New Corbie in northern Germany. It is there we meet him in this extract from his Life. It was written by Rimbart, a fellow monk and his successor as Archbishop of Hamburg, who knew Ansgar personally and this Life is one of the best written of that era. In translating, I have somewhat simplified the text by removing complicated titles and circumlocutions but have tried to reproduce faithfully entire chapters of the work. I have supplied the parentheses but tried to keep my own incursions to a minimum.)

THE FIRST SCANDINAVIAN BAPTISM

When Harold was king over some of the Danes, he was met with hatred and enmity by other Danish kings and was expelled from his kingdom. He went to the emperor, Lewis, asking for help to reconquer his kingdom. Lewis kept him with him and both he and others exhorted him to receive Christianity, so that there would be greater friendship between them, a Christian people would be more willing to aid him and his people if both served one God. Divine grace was granted to him so that he converted to the faith and, sprinkled in holy baptism (in 826), Lewis received him from the holy font and adopted him as his son.

When Harold wished to return to his own people, armed with the king's help, he rewon the borders of his kingdom. Then he began to ask diligently, if a holy devout man could be found who would come and stay with him, to be a teacher of the saving doctrines for the support and transmission of the dominical faith to him and his people. Lewis began to discuss this in a public meeting with his nobles, his priests and other faithful, asking them solicitously to try to find someone willing and able to do such work. They all said no, they did not know any man so devout, one who would be willing to undertake such a dangerous pilgrimage for the sake of Christ. There was at that time a venerable Abbot Wala of the monastery of New Corbie who said to the Emperor that he knew a monk in his monastery who wished to suffer, he burned with much ardor for the divine religion, and for the name of God. He praised both his lifestyle and morals. He thought he was fit for this work. On the other hand, he was not able to attest that he would want to undertake such a pilgrimage.

ANSGAR CALLED AS MISSIONARY TO SCANDINAVIA

What more? Being ordered by the king, he was called to the palace; the abbot told him what had been done and said, and told him why he was summoned. He responded
that he was prepared to serve God in everything which was enjoined on him because of obedience. He was led before Lewis who asked him whether, for the name of God, he wished as a companion of Harold to preach the gospel to the Danish people. He responded at once that he greatly willed it. The abbot said that it would please him but that in no way did he order such a burden to be laid on him. However, if he freely chose to do it, he willingly gave him license to do it by his authority. When this became public knowledge, and it was known to all who lived in the abbot’s house, many began to wonder at this change: that leaving his country and friends, the brothers with whom he was educated with sweetest affection, he wished to seek foreign nations and to converse with the ignorant and barbarians. Many were exasperated with him, reproaching and detesting him. They tried to make him change his mind, but the man of God remained steadfast in will.

AUBERT BECOMES HIS COMPANION

The abbot went to the palace often. Ansgar remained at home fleeing the company of all. He chose a solitary place in a nearby vineyard, spending his time in prayer and reading. At that time there was a certain brother in your monastery, Aubert, who was close to the abbot. He was very concerned and sad for Ansgar who was alone every day, and he saw that he had neither companion nor conversation. He began to sympathize with him and one day ran to the place where he sat alone in his vineyard. He began to ask him whether he really wanted to go on pilgrimage. Ansgar, thinking that he asked not out of compassion but from cunning, answered, What does that matter to you? Don’t try to upset my mind with questions. Aubert answered that he did not at all say this out of deceit, but rather he wished to know truly whether his will was disposed to persevere in his determination. Ansgar thanked Aubert for his goodwill and responded, I have been asked if I wished to go to the pagan people for the name of God to preach the gospel of Christ, which proposal I have not dared to refuse. On the contrary I desire with all my strength the opportunity to go, and nothing can change my mind from this intention. Then the other brother said to him, And I won’t let you go alone, but for the love of God I want to go with you, if you will ask permission for me from the abbot.

Confirming this mutual and devout agreement, Ansgar met the abbot when he returned, and said that he had found a friend who freely wished to go with him as a companion when he set out. When the abbot asked who the person was and Ansgar named him, he was astonished at this very strange thing: that he who was of a noble family in the world, and close to him, and procurator of the house after him, would wish such a thing. He called Aubert and asked him. He responded that he could not allow Ansgar to go alone; but for the name of Christ he wanted to be a solace and help to him if he had permission from him and the brothers. The abbot gave him permission to go if he freely chose this journey. He said that none of the servants from his family would he depute to serve them, unless they were able to persuade someone to do this who freely wished to go with them. The venerable abbot did this not out of ill will, but because it seemed to him unjust at that abominable time for anyone to be forced to live among the pagans against his will.

THE VOYAGE TO DENMARK

After this, they both were brought to Lewis, who was delighted by their will and desire. He gave them the necessities for their ecclesiastical service: chests of books, tents and other assistance which were needed for the journey. He bade them go to Harold, declaring that they should be most concerned about his faith and that of the others who had been baptized, piously exhorting them lest at the instigation of the devil the Danes return to their first errors; they should constantly strengthen them: at the same time they should impress on others by preaching the word that they should receive the Christian religion. They were dismissed by the emperor without a companion to serve them, because no one from the abbot’s family wanted to go of his own will, nor did he want to force anyone who was unwilling to go with them. Harold also, to whom they were sent, being rude and a neophyte, was ignorant how he ought to treat the servants of God. They were newly converted and differently educated so they did not give them much thought. Therefore, with grave difficulty they began the pilgrimage. They came to Cologne, where the then bishop, Hadebold, sympathetic to their needs, gave them a fine ship in which they put their things, on which were two cabins fittingly supplied. Harold, when he saw this, chose to remain on the ship with them, so that he took possession of the one cabin and they the other. Friendship and benevolence began to grow between them from this time his servants diligently took care of them.

They passed Dorestad and went by the territory of the Frisians and came to the Danish border, and as King Harold was not yet able to remain at peace in his kingdom, Lewis gave him a benefice beyond the Elbe where, if it was necessary, he could live. The servants of God, sometimes among pagans and sometimes among Christians, began to press on them the word of God, and admonish whomever they could into the way of truth. Many were converted to the faith by their example and doctrine, and those who were saved in the Lord grew daily. Inspired by divine love, they devoutly began to promulgate religion by diligently seeking boys, whom they laid under obligation and taught to serve God. Harold placed some of his people in their care for instruction. Thus it happened that in a little time they began a school of twelve or more boys. They received others as servants and helpers: their fame and religion in the name of God began to grow most fruitfully. When they had lived two or more years in this holy project, it happened that Aubert was burdened with a severe illness. Taken for this reason to New Corbie, for a long time growing weaker and biliously, we believe, passing at Easter time, as had been revealed to him beforehand by the Lord, he ended his last day.

THE MISSION TO SWEDEN

Meanwhile Swedish legates came to Emperor Lewis. Among other matters delegated to the ambassadors they made known to Lewis that there were many persons among them who desired to receive the cult of the Christian religion. This was pleasing to the mind of their king, he would permit priests of God to be there. As befitted his
munificence, Lewis should choose fitting preachers for them. The emperor, hearing, this was greatly exhilarated. At once he began the search for persons to send to those areas and to examine whether the Swedes were ready for the faith as the legates had intimated. So again the emperor began to deal with Abbot Wala to see if he could find any of his monks who wished to go to these lands for the name of Christ, perhaps one of those living with Harold. Among those who were with Harold was Ansgar who received the commission. He was called by royal order to the palace, there he was officially informed that he should not tonsure himself before he came into the presence of the emperor.

The man of God, completely certain as to why he was called, began with his whole heart to glow fervently in the love of God and to count it all joy if he be called to go to win souls. If anything happened to him in this project which was disagreeable or adverse, he purposed in mind to tolerate it patiently for Christ. He had no doubts in his heart about this work because he was consoled in a divine vision which he had seen.

Earlier, at New Corbie, he had been celestially inspired by two visions. On a certain night it seemed to him that he came into a house where many of the preaching order were being prepared for the office of preaching; before them his mind was rapt in ecstasy and he saw a very bright light, brighter than the sun, sent from heaven which encircled him. As he wondered at what this was, he said he heard a voice similar to that which he had heard in a previous vision, which said to him Your sin is forgiven. He answered, inspired as we believe by the divine spirit saying, Lord, what do you want me to do?

And again the voice sounded, Go and proclaim the work of God to the peoples. The servant of God considered in his mind this vision and rejoiced in the Lord, seeing now from what was partly completed what he was ordered to do, and as a greater crown of his labors desired to proclaim the word of God also in Sweden. When he was brought into the presence of Lewis, he was asked by him whether he wished to undertake this mission. Ansgar responded with willing voice that he was prepared for anything which by his authority he decreed be enjoined on him for the name of Christ.

THE PERILS OF ANSGAR

Then, by the provident ordinance of God, the abbot found him a companion from your fraternity named Witmar, fit and willing for this work. The abbot placed the devout Gislermar with Harold, a man proven in faith and good works and fervent in his zeal for God. Ansgar received the mission enjoined on him by Lewis, that he go to the Swedish lands, and find out whether that people were ready for the faith as the legate had said. On which mission they suffered many evil things. Father Witmar is able to write about them more intimately having been present. It suffices for us to tell that while they were still on the way, they were attacked by pirates. The thieves who went with them defended them manfully and seemed at first to be winning, but at last the pirates overcame them. The ships and all their possessions were taken away from them and they, coming to land, barely escaped by fleeing on foot. Thus the gifts of the king which they needed to bring to Sweden and all that they had were lost except for small things which they were able to carry with them when they jumped from the boat. Among the things lost to the robbers were 40 books, which they had gathered for the cult of God. After this, some were disposed to return, others to go forward. The servant of God could not be deflected from the journey he had begun by any reasoning. He rather let whatever happened to him be up to the judgment of God; he was not minded to go back unless he could discern whether it was possible for him with divine approval to proclaim the word of God in these parts.

After this with great difficulty they went for long distances on foot and, where necessary, crossed the seas which were on the way by boat. They came to the gateway of the kingdom which is called Birka. There they were received kindly by the king, Bjorn, with his legate explaining why they had come. Knowing of their mission, and discussing it with his faithful, he and all alike gave them by oath and consensus license to dwell there and to preach the gospel of Christ, granting liberty to whomever might wish, to test their doctrine. Then the servants of God with eager hearts, seeing that what they hoped for succeeded very well, began to proclaim the word of salvation to those people. There were many who favored their mission and willingly heard the doctrine of the Lord. Many Christians who were held captive rejoiced at being able to participate in the divine mysteries. All that the legation to Lewis had made known was proven to be true and some devoutly sought the grace of baptism. Among these was the prefect and the king's counselor of this place, the beloved Hergerich, who received the gift of baptism and was most firm in the Catholic faith. On his inherited land, he soon built a church and most religiously gave himself to the service of God. Concerning this man, there are still many shining marks and many indications which prove his unconquerable faith, as we will make clear in what follows.

ANSGAR BECOMES A BISHOP

(After Ansgar had been a year and a half in Sweden, with great progress for the faith in Sweden and Denmark, the king decided to establish the see of Hamburg in 831. It would have charge of missions in northern Europe. Ansgar was called to be its first archbishop (832) and approved by pope Gregory IV. Gauthert was sent to Sweden as a bishop to continue the mission there.)

ANSGAR AS THE GOOD BISHOP

Meanwhile, Ansgar strenuously filled the office which was committed to him in his diocese and in parts of Denmark. By the good example of his life he drew many to the grace of faith. He began to take into his service some Danish and Slavic boys, some he redeemed from captivity and educated to the service of God. Some he placed for nurture at the monastery of Turfoth. Holy fathers and teachers from your society were with him here, from whose doctrine and instruction the reputation of religion grew blessedly among us.

(In 837, Hamburg was badly attacked and burned by sea pirates and Ansgar barely escaped with his life.)

RIOTS IN SWEDEN

When this happened, Ansgar and his people were heavily pressed by calamities, and the brothers of his congregation wandered around to various places with the
sacred relics, and had no quiet dwelling place because of the prevailing machinations of the iniquitous. By diabolic instigation the people of Sweden, burning with zealous fervor, then began to persecute bishop Gauthbert insidiously. Some of the people by unanimous agreement rushed into his house to plunder it. The sword killed his nephew, Nithard, and, struck by those who hate the name of Christian, he became a martyr of God, as we believe. They bound Gauthbert and other companions who were there, and stole everything which they were able to find. With abuse and shame they expelled them from their borders. This was not done by order of the king, but was perpetrated by a popular conspiracy.

**DIVINE REVENGE**

The mercy of the divine majesty did not suffer this to pass unavenged, but almost all who took part soon were punished in various ways. Much could be said, but lest we bore the readers, we take care to mention only this example, that from one who suffered loss, the punishment of the others might be seen. There was in that country a powerful man whose son took part in this conspiracy, and he brought part of the spoils to his father’s house. Then his estate began to diminish, and his cattle and household to perish. The son, struck by divine vengeance, died. Also his wife and another son and a daughter soon died. Then, when he saw he had lost everything except for one small son, the poor man began to fear the wrath of the gods, and to consider what God had been offended so that he had to suffer all this. He went, as was their custom, to a certain diviner, asking him to seek by lots if he had offended any god, and to tell him how he could appease him. The diviner did all that he was accustomed to do in his cult, and he responded that all of their goods were pleased with him but the Christian God was highly offended at him.

He said, Christ has destroyed you and you have suffered all of this trouble because something which was consecrated to him was hidden in your house. Nor can you be freed from this as long as it remains in your house. Hearing this, he carefully considered what this thing might be. He then remembered that his son had carried a book from the spoils into his house. Struck with great horror and terror, not knowing what to do with the book as there was no priest there, and not daring to keep it any longer, he had an idea. He brought it out and showed it to the people who lived in his villa, telling them what he had suffered. They all said they did not know what should be done with it and that they would be afraid to take it or have it in their homes. He was struck dumb at the thought of keeping it any longer. He had it wrapped well and placed it by a fence, saying that whoever wanted it could take it. For the crime he had committed, he vowed to make voluntary satisfaction to the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the Christians took this book and carried it home. We heard this from his mouth as afterwards he was a person of great faith and devotion, so that he was able to say with us the Psalms by heart without a book. All the rest were punished, either by death or the plague or loss of property, and it was clear to all that whoever presumed to deal shamefully with or to despoil a holy priest or anything that belonged to God would feel the heavy vengeance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**ANSGAR IS SENT TO SWEDEN**

After this, Birka was without a priest for seven years, which caused Ansgar great anxiety, not wanting the faith of the Christian religion, which had begun, to perish there. Taking thought of his godson, Herve, he sent an anchoress to Birka, instructing him that he stay very close to him. Coming there, Ardgar was officially received by Herve and the Christians living there who displayed great joy at his presence. They began, as they had done before, to seek devoutly the things which were of God and willingly to observe the rite of Christians. None of the unbelieving dared to resist his preaching, as they remembered with fear that punishments were multiplied on those who had expelled the servants of God. At the advice of Herve and their king at that time, Ardgar began by order and license to celebrate publicly the mysteries of God.

**THE TRIALS OF HERGEIR**

Herve, at the time when no priest was present, had sustained much opprobrium from the unbelieving: not by the gift of divine grace, at his petition, the proclamation of the true faith was declared by heavenly signs. From which, as we promised, we will insert the following account, so that his unconquered spirit of faith may be shown. Once he was seated in an assembly in a field tent made from furs, which had been prepared for a conference. Among other things which were said at this meeting, the others praised their gods, by whose favor they had prospered greatly. They reproached Herve with many words as being the only one of their whole group who had left them for an inane faith. He, burning in spirit, said, If there is any doubt concerning the divine majesty, about which there should be no doubt at all, let us prove by miracles who has the greater power, your many gods of which you spoke, or my only omnipotent Lord Jesus Christ. It is about to rain (rain hung heavily over them), call on the names of your gods asking that not a drop of rain fall on you and I will call on my Lord Jesus Christ, asking that not a drop of rain fall on me. Whose hears someone calling on him, let him be god.

So it was done by mutual agreement. They all sat in one part, he with a small boy in another. Each of them began to call on his god. He called on the Lord Jesus Christ, and a heavy rain fell from the sky so that they all were flooded, they looked as though they had been thrown into the river with their clothes on, and the branches which covered them fell on them with a loud crash which showed that they were weighed down by divine power. Not one drop of rain fell in Herve or the boy who was with him. At which the others were confused and wondered. Look, he said, you can see who is God, unhappy ones. Do not wish to recall me from this worship, but rather be confounded in your errors and discover the way of truth.

At another time it happened that he had a terrible pain in his shin bone, so that he could not get around unless he was carried. When he had suffered this illness for a long time, many visitors came to exhort him that for the sake of his health he should sacrifice to their gods, and reminded him, attacking him with reproaches, that he was without god and for that reason in bad health. They did this often and he always resisted their evil suggestions. Finally he could not stand their calumnies and responded that he
never wanted to seek help from their vain images, but from his Lord Jesus Christ who was able to help in a moment, if he wished, and to heal his infirmity. He gave orders to his servants that they should carry him into his church. Being placed there, before all who were present he poured out suppliants prayers to the Lord, saying, My Lord Jesus Christ, so that these poor ones may know that you are God alone and there is none other beside you. Grant to me your servant pristine health of body, that the enemies, seeing your great works, may be confounded in their errors and converted to the knowledge of your name. Do what I ask for your holy name which is blessed in the ages. Lord, lest those trusting in you be confounded. After which cry, medicated by divine grace, at once he completely regained his health. Leaving the church by himself, he gave thanks to God for his health.

BIRKA ATTACKED BY THE DANES

About this same time, a certain king of the Swedes, Anund, was exiled from his kingdom and was in exile in Denmark. Desiring to regain the borders of his kingdom, he began to seek help from the Danes, whom he promised would prosper with many gifts if they followed him. He Hergeir, the prefect of this place, was present with the traders and the residents. In a difficult position, they fled to Sigtuna and began to promise and offer many sacrifices and vows to their gods, that is, to say demons, that they might help them and keep them unharmed in danger. But as this city was not very strong and offered little resistance, they sent messengers to the Danes extending their right hand in federation. Anund decreed that for the redemption of this place they should pay out 100 silver pounds so that they might have peace. What he asked, they sent at once and it was taken by the king. But the Danes were vehemently opposed to this decision, because this was not what they had agreed to. They wanted to make a quick raid on the Swedes and to pillage the place and burn it to the ground, explaining that any trader there had more than had been offered to them and they couldn't allow such chicanery.

When they agreed on this between themselves and prepared to invade the town into which the Swedes had fled, this became known to the Swedes. They came together again, as the men had no way they could resist their enemies and had no hope of refuge, they exhorted each other to offer greater vows and sacrifices to their gods. Hergeir, angry at them, said Your vows and your sacrifices with your gods be cursed to God. How long do you want to serve demons and to reduce yourself to ruinous poverty by your useless vows and sacrifices? Look, you've sacrificed a lot and vowed even more, beyond which you've given 100 silver pounds. What have you gained? Everything you own they are coming to destroy; they will lead your wives and children captive, they will burn with fire your city and neighborhood, and you will perish by the sword. What good do your idols do? At which speech they were terrified, not knowing what to do, they all answered. You should work out a plan of salvation for us, whatever you suggest to us we will certainly do. He said, If you wish to make a vow, vow and repay it to the Lord Almighty who reigns in the heavens and whom I in pure conscience and true faith serve. He is Lord of all and all things are ordered by his will, nor is anything able to resist his authority. If with all your heart you seek his help, you will not feel his omnipotence lacking for you.

Accepting his plan unanimously and voluntarily, and going into the field as was their custom, they vowed for their liberation fastings and alms to the Lord Christ. Meanwhile, Anund chose to travel to the Danes and they consulted the lots as to what was the will of the god of this place they would devastate. He said, There are many and great gods in Birka and a church has been constructed there where the cult of Christ is celebrated by many Christians. He is the strongest of the gods and is able, if he wishes, to help those who hope in him. Therefore, it is necessary to seek whether you have been invited to do this by the divine will. They, as was their custom, were not able to refuse this. The lots were consulted and it was discovered that what they wanted to do would not prosper them, nor was the place they wished to destroy granted them by God. They asked where they should sail to, a place where they could acquire a lot of money, so that they would not be frustrated by a vain hope and return home empty handed. The lots fell that they should go to a certain distant

Ruined Church of St. Olaf, Sigtuna

pointed out to them the town of Birka where there were many rich traders. He would lead them to this place where, without great loss to his forces, they could easily enjoy what they needed. They were delighted with the promised rewards and avid for the acquisition of treasures. They filled 21 ships with warriors for the battle and sent them with him. Moreover, he had eleven ships of his own.

Leaving Denmark, they came without warning to Birka. As it happened, the king of Birka was far away and the princes and the multitude of people could not be gathered.
town in the borders of the Slavs. The Danes did this, believing that they were so divinely ordered. They left Birka and went by direct route to the Slavic city, falling on its quiet and secure inhabitants, they suddenly made an armed attack on the city and returned home with captives, spoils and many treasures.

THE DEATH OF HERGEIR

King Anund, who came to plunder the Swedes, remained with them peacefully. He returned the gold he had taken from men and dwelt near them for some time, wishing to be reconciled with his own people. Thus the grace of God, because of the faith of his servant Hergeir, freed the people of Birka from invasion and restored to them their property. After this, openly in a public meeting, Herger discussed what had happened, and said that they should examine more closely who was God. He admonished, Alas, miserable ones, not knowing how vain it is to ask help from the demons who are not able to help you in tribulation! Receive the faith of my Lord, Jesus Christ whom you have proven to be the true God, who granted solace to you who had no right to his mercy. Do not wish to seek any superstitious cult and to please your idols with empty sacrifices. Adore the true God, who rules all things in heaven and on earth and is subject to his omnipotence. After this, becoming stronger in the faith, he proclaimed more eagerly to all the grace of faith and the many benefits of the Lord, sometimes harshly, sometimes comfortingly.

Thus he fought the good fight to the end of his life; finishing his course with good works, growing weak, with Priest Ardgår standing by commending him to the divine mercy, receiving holy communion, he died blessedly in Christ. Many still speak of the constancy of his faith, but as we take pains to be brief, this will suffice.

THE PIUS FRIDEBORG

At that time there was among the Swedes a very pious housewife. The rectitude of her faith could not be changed by any perversity of the wicked. She was frequently in need and then it was suggested to her that she sacrifice to idols as was their custom. Steadfast in faith, she would not desert her vows. She said it was in vain that they sought help from their deaf and dumb idols. She thought that by returning to the idols she had renounced, she would be swearing falsely; it seemed abominable to her to renounce the promise made to Christ at her baptism. If it is wrong to lie to other people, she said, is not lying to God worse? And if it is good that people keep faith with each other, is it not even more important that the person who has sworn his faithfulness to God never change his vow or mix the truth with vanities? My Lord Jesus Christ is almighty and if I hold fast to my faith in him, he can if he wills give me both health and all the possessions which I need. This pious woman, Frídegör, was praiseworthy for her irreproachable life and steadfast faith and lived in this manner until she was an old woman.

But then she thought that the day of her death approached, and that after Sir Gautbert departed there would be no priest there. Out of love for the office of the Christians called viaticum before death, she bought a little wine which she kept in a flask. She gave her daughter, who was also pious and believing, the task of pouring a little of the wine into her mouth when her last hour approached, because if she could not receive the wine of the sacrifice, by the wine which trickled into her mouth, she could commend her departure to the grace of the Lord. This wine she kept near her for three years and then it happened that priest Ardgár came there. When he settled down she continued as long as her strength allowed, to piously practice her devotions, and earnestly prayed him to celebrate Mass and to deliver her saving messages.

Finally, her strength began to fail and she became ill. She was concerned about dying and had the priest called and when she received the prolonged for viaticum from his hand, she went blessedly to the Lord. She had always been fervent in almsgiving as she was also rich in earthly goods, and she had ordered her daughter Katala to give whatever she owned to the poor after she departed this light. And because there are not many poor persons here, she said, After my death, as soon as you are able, sell everything which has not been given away here and take the money and go to Dorestad. There are many priests and churches and religious persons there and many needy persons. When you come there, take counsel of trustworthy teachers who are able to give you reliable information about how you shall dispense the money and distribute all of it as a medicine for my soul.

After the mother's death, the daughter carefully did as her mother had instructed her. She quickly went on her way and came to Dorestad, and sought some pious women who could accompany her to the holy places and tell her how much she should dispense. One day, when they went around to the holy places to make donations and half of the money was already given out, Katala said to her companions. Now we are tired. It is best that we buy a little wine and refresh ourselves with it, so that we are able to complete what we began.

They spent four denars and then with strength renewed they finished what they had begun. When they had completed their almsgiving, Katala returned to her inn and laid away in an open place the empty purse which had held the money. When she returned to this place, she found the purse just as full as it had been before, thanks to a heavenly gift. Surprised by this miracle, she called the pious women who had gone with her and showed them what had happened. In their presence she counted out what was in the purse and there were just as many coins there as in the beginning save for four denars.

Taking thought with them, she went to the priests who seemed most reliable and told them about this. They praised the grace of God for this goodness and explained that the Lord had rewarded her for her efforts and good intentions. Because you obeyed your mother, they said, and kept your promise to her, undertaking so difficult a journey, carefully giving alms as she instructed, the Lord, who rewards all the good, has given you this as a repayment of wages and a contribution for your needs. He is almighty and has enough for everyone and himself needs nothing. In the heavenly kingdom he will repay everything which has been given by his faithful servants for his name's sake to the poor and for the needs of his servants. So that you will not do this in any way, and will not be sorry for having given away what was given to you, the Lord has deigned to give the attention of a miracle to you. From this sign you may also firmly believe that your mother has been saved with the Lord. This miracle also teaches you that you should
not be afraid to give away your possessions for the sake of Christ, being certain that you will receive your reward from the Lord in heaven. This which God has given you is your own and, as you deem wise, you may spend it as you wish. But that which you took for your own use, he will not give back to you; for in his great mercy he only restores what has been shared with his poor out of love for him.

After the death of Hergeir, Priest Ardgar, out of love for the hermit life which he had previously lived, left Sweden and returned to his own country. Again that people lacked a Christian priest stationed there. From this it is clear that the anchorite Ardgar was sent to these parts to strengthen the faith of Hergeir and this matron, also to commend their departure to the divine mercy and, as they faithfully desired, to give them the mystery of holy communion which they received as the last viaticum.

(On the death of Lewis the Pious in 840, the empire was divided between three rulers and Angsar lost his prebend of the monastery of Thorhout. This brought him into severe poverty and many of his priests and monks left him. Lewis the German, grandson of Charlemagne, made him Bishop of Hamburg. In 864, Pope Nicolas I confirmed him as Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen, having a mission to the Swedes, Danes and Slavs.)

**ANSGAR AND THE DANISH KING**

When Angsar had received the diocese of Bremen, he began to burn in his inner spirit again. Having now resources at his disposal, he was able to work for the name of Christ in the country of the Danes, wherefore frequently he took time to visit Horik, who then was the only monarch of the kingdom of the Danes. He took gifts with him, and was able to reconcile him by doing things for him, so that Angsar was able to gain permission from the king to preach in his kingdom. At other times, the king sent messengers to him, and strenuously and faithfully proposed a peaceful union as useful to both kingdoms. So, knowing the faithfulness and goodness of the holy man, King Horik began to venerate him with great affection, seeking his counsel freely and most familiarly in everything. He let him take part in secret affairs as he dealt with his counselors concerning state matters. Even those things which were to be decided concerning a federation between the people of these lands, the Saxons, and his kingdom, he wished to establish with nothing other than Angsar's good faith. He said Angsar was the most faithful of men and so he praised and leagued himself with him. Enjoying this familiarity, Angsar began to persuade him that he should become a Christian. Everything which he pointed out to him from sacred scripture, Horik heard kindly, and praised as being good and truly salutary. He delighted in these things and very much wanted to deserve the grace of Christ. Seeing his desire, Angsar began to suggest that he grant a kindness to the Lord Christ and that, if it pleased him, he should permit a church in his kingdom where a priest could be present at all times and the seed of the divine word and the grace of baptism be handed over to anyone wishing to receive it. Horik granted this most kindly. He permitted a church to be built in a port city of his kingdom which was most fitting for this in the area near Slesvig, where traders from all countries met. He gave a residence to the priest and also permitted anyone in his kingdom who so wished to become a Christian.

Angsar accepted this permission. What he had long desired he did (a later note in the manuscript says 'and consecrated the church in honor of Mary, the holy mother of God') and with a resident priest, by the grace of God, the church in that place began to grow most fruitfully. Many who lived there were Christians before this time, having been baptized in Dorestad or Hamburg, among them some of the leading citizens, and they rejoiced at being given permission to practice their Christianity. Seeing their example, many others, both men and women, left the cult of their superstitions and idolatry and, being converted to belief in the Lord, were baptized. There was great joy in Slesvig, because, without fear, men of our nation and our traders and those from Dorestad freely went there, which was not possible before. Supplies of all kinds of merchandise were plentiful there. Many who were baptized remained there and a great multitude clad in white went together from there to the heavenly kingdom. Willingly they received the sign of the cross, becoming catechumens. They went to church and were allowed to be present at the sacred offices, but they delayed being baptized. They thought it would be good to be baptized at the end of their lives so that, saved in the washing of purification and pure and immaculate, they might enter without delay the doors of eternal life. Many of them who were sick, when they saw it was vain to sacrifice to their idols for their health and their neighbors despaired for them, fled to the Lord for mercy and promised they would be Christians. When the priest was called, they received the grace of baptism and they were given the largess of health by divine grace. Thus the mercy of the Lord grew in this place and a multitude of people were converted to faith in the Lord.

**ANSGAR'S DESIRE TO RETURN TO SWEDEN**

Meanwhile, Angsar, grieving with great affection for the Swedish people because they had no priest, began to petition Horik, who was very close to him, to help him so that he could travel to the borders of that kingdom. Horik received this petition most kindly and promised he would do everything. Angsar began to discuss this with Bishop Gautbert, saying it was necessary to reexamine whether after their divine admonishment, this people was willing to allow a priest to live with them, lest the faith of Christ which had begun in these parts presently perish out of neglect. Bishop Gautbert (who took the name Simon when he was consecrated Bishop), who had been expelled from Birka responded that he did not dare to return there, nor did he think there was a great deal to be gained from going, but that it was very dangerous because they might remember the earlier riot they had aroused against him. Rather it seemed fitting to him that Angsar who had first received this mission should go as he had lived there in friendship. He would send his nephew with Angsar. If a place was found for preaching, the nephew would remain there and function in the sacerial office for them.

Having agreed to this, they went to King Charles the Bald and referred the cause to him, and they urged him to permit them to do this by his license. He wanted to know whether their wishes were in accord on this matter, and he received this response from Gautbert: We now and always have agreed in the service of God. Thus, the king, always
most ready in the things of God, agreed to what they had
decided: he enjoined this mission for the name of Christ on
Ansgar. As his father had done, he committed to him a
message for the Swedish king.

ANSGAR'S VISION

So Ansgar began to prepare himself for this journey, and
his spirit was aroused more fervently to do this quickly. He
believed that he had been ordered to do this from heaven
because of being taught by a vision which he had seen. It
was shown to him that he should be very concerned about
this journey, as he indeed was, and it was shown to him
that he would come to a certain place in which there was
a great complex of houses, and many mansions where
someone met him and said, You are concerned about this
journey; do not be greatly saddened by those things which
are in your heart as there is a prophet here who will inform
you about everything. And lest you have any doubt in your
mind about this, I will tell you who the prophet is. It is
a famous abbott, Adalhard, he is the prophet now sent
to you from the Lord. He will tell you what is to happen.

Being shown this, he responded to him with an
exhilarated mind. Sir, where will I find him? He said, You
will find him by your own labor, for it is not licit for anyone
to introduce him to you. Then it seemed to Ansgar that he
went through the rounds of the mansions seeking him, at
the same time pondering this: If without being asked he will
tell me what things I have in my mind, then I will have
proved that he is a true prophet. Just then he came to the
brightest and most beautiful mansion and he saw him
sitting in his chair, and recognized him at once. He quickly
began to speak, looking intently at him, Hear, O islands, and
pay attention people afar off. The Lord has called you from
the womb, from the belly of your mother he has remembered your name. And he has placed a sharp sword
in your mouth, he has protected you in the shadow of his
hand, he has placed you as a choice arrow; he has hidden
you in his quiver, and said to you, You are my servant. I have
gloried in you. Having said this, he extended his right hand
to him and began to rise. Ansgar fell to his knees at seeing
this hoping that he wanted to bless him. Adalhard added,
And now the Lord has said this to you, forming you as his
servant from the womb: I have given to you to be a light to
the gentiles, and you will be a means of salvation for them
to the ends of the earth. Kings will see and princes will rise
up, and they will adore your Lord God and the Holy One of
Israel, because he has glorified you.

Therefore, the servant of God had this vision firmly in
mind which he had seen long before he made his journey.
He thought he was urged by God’s order to go to Sweden,
above all by these words: Hear, O islands, as almost all of
that country is made up of islands; and further: You will be
a means of salvation for them to the ends of the earth. The
ends of the earth lie in the north, in Swedish lands. Then
the word concerning the prophet Jeremiah having its
ended altered to say: He will glorify you, fed the great ardor
of his desire, as he thought that this signified the palm of
martyrdom which had long been promised to him.

PLANS AND PROBLEMS

So, as he began this journey, he had with him also a
communication sent from King Horik. He commanded him
to tell the Swedish king, Olaf: The servant of God who was
sent by King Lewis to his country is well known, and no one
knows anything but good about him. In all his life he has
found no one more faithful. Therefore being found most
holy in his goodness, he wished to arrange everything in his
kingdom according to the Christian religion. He had granted
to him what he asked, he permitted and established the
Christian religion to be practiced in his kingdom as Ansgar
desired, and said that Ansgar wished to do only what was
right and good.

Receiving this, he began the journey, sailing for almost
20 days until he came to Birka where he found the king and
a multitude of people confused in great error. At the
instigation of the devil, who knew ahead of time of
Ansgar’s arrival, someone came to Olaf and said that he
had come from the council of the gods who were believed
to possess the world. They had sent him to enjoin to the
king and people: You have had our goodwill and have held
this land as your dwelling place in peace and prosperity by
our abundant aid for a long time. You have also discharged
your sacrifices and due vows to us and your rites were
pleasing to us. Now you will remove your customary
sacrifices, and you will be lazy in offering your free vows
and, what displeases us more, you will introduce another
god before us. So if you want us to be kind to you, increase
the sacrifices you have omitted and perform your vows.
This strange worship of God, which he teaches contrary to
us, should not be received by you and you should not pay
attention to serving him. For if you want to have more gods,
and we are not enough for you, we will add your one time
King Eric to our gathering so that he will be one of the
number of the gods. This diabolic mandate was publicly
announced, and the minds of all were perturbed when
Ansgar came, and error and perturbation greatly confused
men’s minds. For they also ordered a temple to be built in
honor of the deceased king and they began to offer
sacrifices and vows to him as god.

ANSGAR ARRIVES IN SWEDEN

When Ansgar came, he began to ask some of his
acquaintances how he should importune the king about
this. They all dissented from him, asserting that nothing at
all could be done about his mission at this time, but if he
had any valuables on him, he ought to give them away so
that he might escape with his life. He responded to them, I
have not been given these things to redeem my life, as if
my Lord had arranged them thus, for his name I am
prepared to undergo torture and suffer death.

He was most concerned about this matter. Having
thought things over, he invited the king to his dwelling.
Preparing a banquet, he sat down and offered him the gifts
and told him about the mission entrusted to him. Already,
by a letter from Horik, and from Ansgar’s friends living in
Birka, the king knew why Ansgar had come. Pleased and
kindly minded because of his meal and the gifts he had
been given, he responded joyfully that he wished to do
what had been asked of him. But before this, he said, there
have been clerics who were driven out by the sedition of
the people, not by order of the king. Therefore, I am not
able and do not dare to confirm your mission before I
consult our gods by lots and ask the will of the people. Let
your mission be next to me in the next council and I will
speak for you to the people and if your wishes are
agreeable to the gods what you ask will prosper, if not, I
will let you know.
It is their custom that any public business is decided by the unanimous will of the people rather than by the power of the king. Ansgar accepted the king's answer, he took refuge entirely in the Lord, fasting and praying, and in contrition and affliction of heart, humiliated himself in the sight of the Lord.

Placed in this difficult situation when the day of the council neared, while the priest standing at the altar blessed the holy mystery; Ansgar, prostrate on the ground, was infused with a heavenly inspiration. Inwardly he was strengthened with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and comforted with great faith. He knew then that all would turn out as he wished. Whence, after Mass, he said to the priest whom he knew well that he should have no trepidation as the grace of God was with him. Being asked how he knew this, he responded, By divine inspiration. The brother knew very well how his mind was enlightened as many times before he had been proven by many signs to be divinely consoled.

The event at once confirmed the belief of his mind. For the king, when he had assembled his princes attacked in one to deal with this mission of Ansgar. They decided to consult the lots, as to what the will of the gods was. Therefore, going out into the field as was their custom, they cast lots, and the lot fell that it was the will of the gods that the Christian religion be founded there.

One of the nobles, a friend of Ansgar, at once informed him of this, and as he wished to comfort him, admonished him saying, Be comforted and act manfully, for God has not denied your desire and your mission. Being reassured, he rejoiced inwardly in the spirit and exulted in the Lord. Then, when the day of the council approached, which by custom, was held in Birka, the king by the voice of a messenger made this known to the people. When they heard this, as of old, they were in confusion of error. They began to have different opinions and to raise a tumult. While there was this brawling, one arose among the people, their senior by birth, and said, Hear me, king and people. Many of us know a lot about the worship of this God, as he is able to help greatly those hoping in him. For many of us have tested him often in peril at sea and in various necessities. Why then do we cast away what is needful for us and we know as useful? Some of us have gone to Dorestad and feeling this to be their rule of religion, freely willed to receive it. Now many dangers lie between here and there and the trip has become very dangerous because of pirate raids. That which we solicitously sought, being far away from here, should we not receive when it is offered to us here? And as we have proven that the grace of God is very useful to us in many ways, why do we not freely allow his servants to live with us here? Listen to our advice, people, and don't desire to throw away what is useful to you. As we are not able to have gods who are favorable to us, it is good to have the grace of this God who always and in everything is able and wants to help those who call on him. After this abatement, the multitude of people were united and chose to have the priests stay with them. Those who sought the mysteries of Christ could do so unhindered.

Then the king arose in the council and sent his messenger with Ansgar's messenger to tell him that all the people were converted to his desire. This was completely pleasing to him but he was not yet able to give him complete freedom until he had announced this at another council to be held in a different part of his kingdom to the people who lived there. Ansgar needed again his customary assistance and he intently prayed divine mercy. Lo when the time of the council arrived the king made known by the voice of a messenger the mission of Ansgar and everything which had been said and done at the prior council. By the gift of divine providence, the heart of all were as one, they praised the general agreement of the prior council and agreed with everything which had been done there.

After this, the king called the bishop to him and told him what had happened; he decreed as by the unanimous will and general consensus that they should build churches where they lived and that a priest should live there and that whoever wished could be a Christian without hindrance. Ansgar commended into the hands of the king the nephew of Gauert, Ernibert, so that protected by his aid and defense he might do the divine mysteries in Birka. The king gave space there for the building of an oratory; Ansgar bought another for a priest house, the king then showed his kind favor and affection to Ansgar, he promised most faithfully he would be favorable to the Christian cult in all his territory. Thus through the grace of God, all was rightly done and Ansgar returned home.

**ANSGAR'S ANGUISH**

Ansgar knew beforehand by divine revelation that he would suffer great mental anguish on this journey. For it seemed to him one day that it was the time of the Lord's passion when the Lord Jesus Christ was led to Herod and back from Herod to Pilate and was spit upon by the Jews and soldiers and suffered opprobrium, it seemed that all the members of Christ's body were being whipped. He could not stand for him to be punished like this, so he ran and stood with his back to the whip and he took the beating on his own body. He was not able to protect Christ's head because he seemed to be taller than Ansgar.

The unconquerable soldier of Christ had not realized what this meant before he returned from the journey. Then he remembered what opprobrium and denunciation he had undergone and how great was his anguish, how many blasphemies against God he had sustained. Now it occurred to him that without doubt he had suffered for Christ and that Christ in his servant had sustained the reproaches which he had previously borne. He thought the head of Christ which he was not able to defend signified God, as the sufferings which the saints sustain in this world for Christ, also partly pertain to the majesty of God. These sufferings which he receives he tolerates for a time but he will judge them severely, as it is written, Mine is the vengeance. I will repay, says the Lord.

**THE RAID ON THE KURS**

The way the power of God was revealed to the Swedes after Ansgar had returned home should not be forgotten. A people who lived at a distance from them called Kurs an eastern Baltic people probably living in what is now Latvia were once subject to Swedish rule, and long before this they had rebelled and scorned Swedish rule. The Danes knew this and now when Ansgar had gone to Sweden, they gathered a great number of ships and went to Kurland, wishing to take their property and subject them to the Danes. There were five cities in their country. The citizens, knowing the Danes were coming, gathered together and
began manfully to resist and defend themselves. They were victorious and cut down half of the Danes and plundered half of their ships, taking gold and silver and many spoils from them.

Hearing this, King Olaf and the Swedish people wished to make the name for themselves that they were able to do what the Danes could not do, and because the Kurs were once subject to them, went to their country with an enormous armed force. Unexpected, they came first to a city in their kingdom called Seeburg in which there were 7,000 soldiers. Suddenly falling on them, they laid the town waste, despoiled it and burnt it. Then, strong in mind and with savage hearts, they sent away the ships and made a quick five-day journey to another city called Pilen. There were 15,000 soldiers in that city. When they came there, the Kurs enclosed themselves in the city. The Swedes began to attack the city from outside and those inside virilely fought back and defended themselves, as those outside struck at them. Eight days passed and, fighting all day from morning to evening, they waged war. Many fell there but neither party was victorious.

On the ninth day the Swedes were falling from fatigue and began to be troubled and timid of heart and only to think of escape. They said, We aren’t getting anywhere and our ships are far away. It was a five days journey back to the port where they had their ships. They did not know what to do and there was a great disturbance so they decided to consult the lots to see if their gods wanted to help them to be victorious or to get out alive. The lots being cast, they were not able to find any of the gods who wanted to help them. When this was told to the people, great wailing and mourning arose in the camp and they were sapped of strength. They said, What are we miserable ones going to do, the gods have left us and none of them is our helper. Where shall we flee? Our ships are far away, when we flee they will follow us and wipe us out. What hope do we have? When they were in this tight spot, some traders, remembering the doctrines Ansgar had taught them, began to tell them. The God of the Christians often helps those who call on him and is powerful in his aid. Let’s ask whether he is willing to be with us and let us promise our common vows to him from willing hearts. To this proposal all wanted the lots cast and it was found that Christ wanted to help them. When this was made known publicly to all, suddenly their hearts were strengthened so that, bravely, they wanted to war on the city at once. They said, Why should we be afraid? Why quake? Christ is with us, let us fight and act manfully, nothing can stand against us, nor will certain victory escape us, as we have the most powerful of the gods as our helper. They gathered together, joyful and strong in spirit and began to attack the city.

They surrounded the city and wanted to begin the battle when they were asked by those who were within that they be given an opportunity to speak. When the Swedish king approved, they continued thus: Peace rather than war pleases us now, and we want to enter a federation with you. First, whatever spoils of arms or gold we acquired from the Danes last year we will give to you as a gift of federation. Then for every man stationed in this city we will give a half pound of silver; and we will pay you higher taxes than formerly, and leaving the fortification, we wish to be subject and obedient to your rule as we were before. When they offered these things, they still could not calm the minds of the young, indeed they were fearless and became more eager and desired to fight undauntedly. They desired to lay waste the city with its arms and all which it had and to lead them captive. But the king and the wiser princes took their right hand and entered into federation, and with innumerable treasures and thirty hostages they returned home. Being federated in peace, the Swedes praised together the omnipotence of our Lord Christ and his magnificence with all their strength, as he was indeed great above all gods, proclaiming that they had obtained the victory there.

The Jelling Stone, (Demark) erected by Harald Blue Tooth (c. 935-985)

Then it happened that, by divine judgment, king Horik was killed battling pirates, some of whom were his relatives, who had invaded his kingdom. All the princes of the land who were friends and acquaintances of Ansgar were killed by the sword.

When Horik the Younger was made king, some of the new princes whom Ansgar did not know began to persuade Horik that the church which had been built should be torn down and the young Christian religion be uprooted. They said, The gods are angry at us because they think it is wrong that another unknown god received their worship. Hovi, a count from Slesvig, was a leader in resisting Christianity and urged the king to destroy the faith, order the church to be closed, and prohibit the observance of the
Christian religion. So the priest who was in Slesvig left, being forced out by the bitter persecution.

THE CHURCH IS ESTABLISHED IN DENMARK

Ansgar was very concerned about this and deeply troubled because he knew none of the friends of Horik the Younger. Previously he had acquired acquaintances by generous gifts and thus was able to reconcile the king’s will. Lacking human help, he turned to the divine aid as was his custom. Nor did his faith fail him. For the Lord consoled him spiritually with mental consolation; he was assured that in no way could the nascent religion be destroyed by the machinations of the enemy. This was what happened with the Lord’s approval not much later. When Ansgar arranged to go to Horik, by the prevenient grace of God, Horik expelledLogFile from his land so that he never again regained the king’s favour. He graciously sent a messenger to Ansgar asking him to send the priest back to his church. He assured Ansgar that, not less than Horik the Elder, he wished to merit the grace of Christ and to obtain the bishop’s friendship. Ansgar himself came into the presence of the king with the help of Burghard, an illustrious count who had been a helper in all things to Horik senior. He had influence with both kings because he was related to them. Ansgar was so well received by young Horik that at once he permitted him to do everything in his kingdom that his predecessor had allowed.

Moreover, which once seemed scandalous to the pagans, he permitted the church to have a bell. He chose a place for a church to be built in another part of his kingdom, in Ribe, and by his authority allowed a priest to live there.

MORE PRIESTS TO SCANDINAVIA

After this, Bishop Gautbert sent a priest, Ansfried, to the Swedish people. He was Danish and had been educated for the service of the Lord by Sir Ebo. When he arrived in Sweden, Priest Ernimbert returned. Much admired, he stayed there for three years or more. When he heard that Sir Gautbert died, he returned and lived with us for some time. He became very ill and as his sickness grew worse, he died. Then Ansgar, not wishing the Christian faith which had begun to parish, arranged to send his priest, Ragenbert, there. He was ready and able to take this task on. Travelling to the port of Slesvig, where there were traders ships on which he could make the journey it chanced on the way, by demonic machination, that he was surrounded and ambushed by Danish thieves. They despoiled him of his possessions and, on the day of the Assumption of Saint Mary, August 15, he blessedly finished his course which he had so willingly undertaken.

Ansgar grieved deeply at this happening, but he could not retract his first intention. Quite soon he ordained another priest for this work, Rimbert, (not the author of this Life), who was of Danish birth. When he was sent to Sweden for the name of Christ, he was kindly received by the king and people and still freely celebrates the divine mysteries among them by the gift of the Lord. Ansgar commanded him, as he did all the other priests whom he had previously stationed among the pagans, to desire or ask for nothing, rather he piously exhorted them with the example of the blessed Paul the apostle, telling them that they should work with their own hands and be content with food and clothing. However, to their needs and those of their successors and for the gifts by which they could gain friends, Ansgar administered generously.

(Ansgar died 3 Feb. 885 of chronic dysentery at the age of 64. After his death, Rimbert who succeeded him in his bishopric continued the mission to the north but gradually the unsettled conditions in northern Europe called a halt to missionary work. Rimbert writes of his death: We believe that accompanied by a great multitude of the faithful who were won for the Lord from the Danish and Swedish people...he will penetrate the kingdom of heaven on the day of resurrection. It would be almost a century before new mission efforts could be undertaken and Scandinavia would become part of Catholic Europe.)

(The Life of Ansgar is printed in the Acta Sanctorum under the date of February 3. The whole of the Life was translated into English by C.H. Robinson: Ansce, the Apostle of the North, (London 1921), it has a very valuable introduction. Bokenom Ansgar (Stockholm 1986) contains a modern Swedish translation of the Life and essays on Ansgar and the tradition of Ansgar in Scandinavia.)

Statue of St. Ansgar, a memorial to Bishop Ansgar Nelson at Portsmouth Abbey, Rhode Island.
News From Scandinavia

Denmark

Caritas Denmark has sent a mobile hospital to Bosnia. It has beds for 39 patients. Enough medicine accompanied the gift to last five months.

Cardinal Cassidy said at Uppsala University that he wanted the Scandinavian Lutheran/Catholic dialogue to progress to a deeper level. The questions of the priesthood and the understanding of the church will be central to the discussion. Also the issue of apostolic succession in the churches of Finland and Sweden is to be discussed.

St. Michael’s School in Randers celebrated its 125th anniversary in 1993. The school has 200 students and is housed in a building from 1978. It has a kindergarten and classes for grades 1-7.

Bishop Møller Jensen received an honorary doctorate from Copenhagen University in November 1993. His studies on Luther and his ecumenical work were noted in the promotion.

After 53 years, the 170 Catholics in Vordingborg have their own church building. The church of the Holy Spirit was built on the site of the medieval house of the Holy Spirit. In North Jylland there are four churches. In Aalborg the church now has 1,400 members. Many of its members are from Poland and Vietnam. In Hjørring a church has grown up since the early ‘80s. The parish is 90% Vietnamese. The present church holds 120 persons and as Sunday attendance is around 250, plans are underfoot to build an addition. In Frederikshavn a church was built in 1866 but only now is there a resident priest. There are 200 Catholics; the largest group is made of Tamil speaking persons. In Thisted there are 100 Catholics who took over a church from the Apostolic Catholics in 1971. Most of the members are Danish.

In Sjælland, the first Catholic mass has been said at Frederikssund. A large congregation was present when Fr. Hans Christoffersen offered the sacrifice of the mass.

Father Czeslaw Kozon will be the new General Vicar in the Copenhagen Diocese. He will continue to be pastor in the parishes of Ordrup and Hellerup. He succeeds Fr. Paul Marx in this position.

Katolsk Orientering

“WE NEED MORE MEMBERS”
A report issued by a group of European sociologists studying religious practice in the decade 1880-1990 concludes that Denmark has become the most secularized country in the western world. Only 2% of the Danish people attend church on Sunday, and religion has little influence in the public discussion of ethical issues. Strangely enough, though, over 90% of the population are officially members of the Danish "People's Church", a national church controlled by the state, and most people are baptized, confirmed, married and buried in church. When I asked friends of mine who are professed atheists why they wanted their baby to be baptized, they thought the answer should be obvious: "Because it's our tradition!"

The Danish religious tradition is often difficult for Denmark's little Catholic community to understand. Roman Catholics make up less than 1% of the population, and have been allowed to practice their faith only since 1849, when Denmark finally adopted a constitution which guaranteed freedom of religion. Catholics were here earlier, of course. The first English and German missionaries came to the Vikings in the beginning of the eighth century, and the country became officially Christian under the influence of King Harald Bluetooth shortly before the end of the first millennium.

The Catholic Church flourished in Denmark during the middle ages. The countryside is still dotted with over 800 magnificent romanesque village churches built in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and cathedrals were built in the cities of Roskilde, Århus, Ribe and Lund (in the Swedish province of Skåne, originally a part of Denmark). All of the great religious orders had communities in Denmark: among the most numerous were the Cistercians, Benedictines, Norbertines, Carmelites, Franciscans and Dominicans. That changed in 1536, when the Lutheran reformation came to Denmark.

Most of the monasteries were torn down and the stones used to build royal palaces, forts, and other civic buildings. Some of the monastic churches were left standing and converted to Lutheran parish churches or even cathedrals, but within a short time the Catholic religion disappeared from Denmark. There were no Catholic priests in the country for the next hundred years, but the newly founded Society of Jesus opened boarding schools in the Baltic States for Scandinavian Catholics in exile, just as it had done in France and the low countries for English recusants.

About 1650 a handful of Jesuits was allowed into Denmark itself. They served in Copenhagen as chaplains to the Spanish and French embassies, and in the border town of Fredericia as chaplains to German mercenary soldiers. In 1686 the Jesuits were allowed to build a chapel for the soldiers in Fredericia, the first Catholic church in Denmark since the Reformation. It was forbidden for Danish citizens to enter the church, and the priests were told that there could be no windows facing the street, no ringing of bells, and no preaching in Danish. St. Knud's Church, the beautiful chapel they built, now serves as the Catholic parish church of Fredericia and is the only church in Denmark built in roccoco style.

Apart from these two small communities of foreigners, the Catholic Church disappeared from Denmark and was not seen again until Denmark granted freedom of religion to its citizens 200 years later. The first major development was the arrival of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry from France. They had been founded by a Jesuit in 1646, and their Ignatian spirituality and charism have made possible a happy apostolic cooperation with the Jesuits in Denmark over the years. At the time of their arrival, Denmark was a poor country of farmers, and the Sisters of St. Joseph were pioneers in the development of educational and health care systems. They founded a dozen schools and eight hospitals, many of them in poor provincial towns where theirs were the only services provided. All of their hospitals have now been taken over by the national health system, but the Danes have not forgotten the sisters' contribution. Their generous service played an essential role in winning acceptance and respect for the Church in Denmark.

The Jesuit chaplains had been replaced by secular priests in 1800, and there were no Jesuits in the country from that time until 1872. That was the year Otto Bismark expelled the religious orders from Germany, and the German Jesuits came to Denmark not only because of their missionary zeal, but also because they were in need of a new home. At the same time, another group of German Jesuits went to America and established the "Buffalo Mission" to German Catholics around the Great Lakes. The Jesuits who came to Denmark, like their brethren who went to Buffalo, Cleveland, and Toledo, did what Jesuits do: they founded schools. Jesuits also founded a number of parishes in Denmark, but their greatest work was the establishment of large schools in Copenhagen and in Århus, Denmark's second largest city. Their new school and church in Copenhagen were designed by the Jesuit architect, Br. Wipfler, who was then sent to Cleveland, Ohio, where he built St. Ignatius High School and St. Mary's Church.

The Jesuit schools in Copenhagen and Århus, both named St. Knud's School after the patron saint of Denmark, flourished and grew. German Jesuits continued their presence in Denmark even after the ban on them had been lifted in Germany, and a number of Danish men entered the Society. All went well until the German occupation of Denmark at the beginning of the Second World War. The war years were difficult for the German Jesuits and sisters in Denmark, but they remained in the country and continued their work. Leslie and Laurence Dorn, two Jesuit scholastics who were sons of a Danish family living in England, were arrested in Copenhagen as enemy aliens and spent the war in a German concentration camp, but happily returned intact. More tragic was the Royal Air Force's accidental bombing of the Jeanne d'Arc School run by the St. Joseph Sisters in Copenhagen, where 88 children and 24 sisters and lay teachers died.

In the years after the war few German Jesuits came to Denmark and the mission began to function more as an

"SCANDINAVIA PLEADS FOR MASS STIPENDS"
independent region, even though it is still a mission of the North German Province. At the present there are three German Jesuits in Denmark, joined by four native Danes as well as Jesuits from Holland, Poland, England, Italy, the United States, and Hungary.

The most significant development in the Danish Mission’s recent history was the foundation of a Jesuit gymnasium, or secondary school, in 1950. In Denmark, school attendance is required only through the ninth grade, after which many students go on to learn a trade or go directly to work. Students who desire a university education, however, must attend a gymnasium, which is a sort of three-year preparatory course for university entrance exams. Gymnasiums are strictly controlled by the national ministry of education, which determines the curriculum and administers standardized final examinations.

In 1950 the Danish Jesuit Georg Heggum managed to obtain permission from the state to establish a Jesuit gymnasium, Niels Steensen’s Gymnasium in Copenhagen. Niels Steensen’s is the only Catholic secondary school in all of Scandinavia. It has about 300 students and is combined with a lower school (6th-10th grades), which has about 400 students. Only half of the students and even fewer of the teachers are Catholics, and therefore the maintenance of the school’s Jesuit identity is a continuous challenge. Because the curriculum is so tightly controlled by the state, we must rely on more subtle methods such as faculty development and campus ministry. Fortunately, we are blessed with a committed and enthusiastic lay faculty, many of whom share Jesuit values and help promote them.

The gymnasium has also become a center for other apostolates, especially the media apostolate developed by Fr. Leslie Dorn, S.J., over the last forty years. There is a Catholic local radio station, a video production company, and a magazine, Katolsk Dialog, which is Denmark’s answer to America.

In addition to these educational and media apostolates, Jesuits in Denmark continue to work in the traditional apostolates of parish work and spiritual direction. The Jesuit parish in Århus is Denmark’s largest and most active, and the apostolate there includes an art gallery (the pastor, Fr. Adolf Meister, S.J., is an artist) and a downtown Catholic Information Center.

With only 30,000 Catholics in Denmark, the church is still very much in a mission situation, and the pastoral needs are great. The Protestant Church has in many ways lost its voice (it is hard for a church whose head is a government-appointed politician, whose priests are civil servants, and whose income comes from taxes to be critical), and the Catholic Church can play an important role as society’s conscience. For example, the Catholic bishop of Copenhagen, Hans Martensen, S.J., has recently protested the Danish government’s refusal to grant asylum to conscientious objectors from Serbia.

The Catholic church in Denmark, although miniscule, is thriving. It is not easy for Danish Catholics to live in the midst of a secular-atheistic society, but the constant stream of Catholic immigrants and refugees (from Viet Nam, Poland, Philippines, and Sri Lanka, for example) brings renewal and new life. The Society of Jesus will be facing great challenges as the present generation of Jesuits grows older and retires, and we hope there will be a fresh wave of vocations to carry on their work.

Martin Chase, S.J.
Niels Steensen’s Kollegium
Copenhagen

Fr. Guy Barbier in the Catholic Church in Tallinn, Estonia

"PLEASE REMEMBER OUR WORK IN YOUR WILL"
Finland

REPORT FROM THE BISHOP OF HELSINKI

Together with the statistics over 1993, I send kindest
greetings to you and the readers of the Bulletin. From the
statistics it becomes clear, that the diocese of Helsinki is
growing and getting close to six thousand. It is, however,
still very much a minority church. A joyful sign of life in the
diocese of Helsinki, about which the statistics keep silence,
is the fact, that two young men from Finland are studying
for the priesthood. It reminds me of a strange trick, which
statistics can play with a minority church. Years ago our
diocese had also two students for the priesthood. Two
vocations for the priesthood in three thousand faithful gave
such a high percentage of vocations that our diocese was
at the top of the list of vocations for the whole world. The
year after, when both candidates had changed their mind
about their task in life, the diocese was again at the list’s
end.

The outstanding event that took place since the last
Bulletin, was the consecration of the church in Kouvola on
the 11th of December. The church is dedicated to Blessed
Ursula Ledochowska, who worked in Finland before the first
world war. The new church lies at the centre of the parish,
which covers a large area of southeast Finland and includes
besides Kouvola other towns such as Lappeenranta, Lahti,
Kotka and Hamina. The consecration ceremony was put on
the central T.V. network and gave many others than those
present in the church a first-hand impression of the
simplicity and clarity of this liturgical event.

In several ways the ties of the still small Catholic
community in Kouvola with the church worldwide came to
the fore. Apart from the obvious connexion of the new
church with the Church in Poland through the blessed
Ursula Ledochowska, the foundation stone, blessed by the
Holy Father during his visit to Finland in 1989, was a
reminder of the unity of the pariah of Kouvola with Rome.
Special attention received also the ties of solidarity with the
faithful in Germany through the Bonifatiuswerk, who made
the building of the new church possible.

Before closing this short greeting, I like to share with you
also some news about the English School, whose fiftieth
anniversary will be celebrated next year. It is in Finland the
only school in Catholic hands. The School has been
founded and administrated by the Sisters of the Most
Precious Blood of O’Fallon, Missouri. The Congregation of
the Sisters can be proud of the excellent task, fulfilled over
these fifty years in their school, which last year received
permission from the state government to be extended with
a further three years, so that it leads up to university level.
Lack of vocations has sadly enough obliged the Sisters of
O’Fallon, together with the diocese, to look for new ways to
keep the school running. At the same time a considerable
sum of money is required to extend and repair the school
for its future years. May I recommend this problem to the
attention and prayers of your readers and yourself?

Wishing you a good summer and God’s blessing.

Paul Verschuren, Bishop

Iceland

THE LAST LETTER OF BISHOP JOLSON
Feb. 6, 1994

Cattle die
and kinsmen die
thyself eke soon wilt die;
but fair fame
will fade never, I ween,
for him who wins it.
The Hovamöl, 77

As we recall the happy - even famous day - Feb. 5,
1988, today’s Holy Scripture rings as true"... my days are
swifter than a weaver’s shuttle my life is like the wind."

To be called to Iceland was a great surprise at nearly 60
particularly as I almost came here at the age of 38 way
back in 1968! I continue to struggle as all do who come to
Iceland - to learn the Icelandic language! It is a daily task -
a word here, a word there - a new awareness of
pronunciation! I wish as my predecessor of happy memory
I could have the years of private study given to our priests
of these days, but there are too many calls for service, for
representing Iceland at episcopal conferences, meetings,
trying to plant the seed of support and awareness for our
small community. Still I confess to try to do better, to keep
at the effort. I am grateful to Gunnar Gudmondsson and
others for their patient help and encouragement.

Every Catholic Bishop from the beginning of the Church
in Iceland particularly those sent and called from abroad
has had to struggle, to carry the weakness of being an
outsider often enough mentioned and communicated to
Rome in complaints. I recall how the late Bishop Taylor of
Stockholm mentioned how pressed Bishop Frehen was to
search out support for our Church abroad. He referred to
him as a "bishop on the run". God has rewarded him for his
efforts and zeal! Our dear Bishop Jóhannes struggled to pay
the debt for our beautiful Cathedral we enjoy this day and
succeeded. He, too, has his reward! All of our Bishops
understood well - Enginn verður óbærinna bishop!

We all - priests and Bishops and religious, do all for the
sake of the Gospel in the hope of having a share of its
blessings.

We need - and I need - to pray more often after the
example of St. Ptolakur - for all Icelanders and particularly
for Iceland’s vocations to the priesthood and religious life
so that our community can be served by native sons and
daughters. We are blessed by our vocations of the past and
now, but the need is greater now! Some feel uneasy - and

"PRAY FOR SCANDINAVIA"
even critical – of the service of priests, religious and even bishops from overseas – yet many feel we are blessed with such a great richness, grace and diversity for our Church through their lives and service. Do pray for our native vocations and appreciate the generous service of generations of priests and religious who happily leave their homes not to gain anything but a share in the blessings of proclaiming the Good News with all of their baggage they carry from their lands!

So today I thank you all and I thank God and I remember the words of our beloved President Vågå when questioned why during the ordination she held the hand of my late Mother Justine who lies within a few meters of us... she is giving her son to Iceland.

That is the truth, the reality – never a dream of my late Icelandic Grandfather Guðmundur Hjalteason and as a priest, Jesuit and of Icelandic origin I am glad to do it!

God bless you all and let us pray for our Roman Catholic Church in Iceland!

Norway

The establishment of a Trappistine monastery in Norway is now "on hold"; the original site, though deserted ten months of the year, is overrun by hikers, backpackers and campers during the two summer months, and other places offered for sale were either unsuitable or too costly. Additionally, Sr. Ina herself needed surgery; therefore she has returned to her monastery in France, and Sr. Marjoe to hers in Mississippi.

Nevertheless, their efforts have resulted in an increased commitment to a renewed Cistercian presence in Norway. Many Norwegians, both Catholic and Lutheran, desire this, and also the Order, especially Sr. Ina’s and Sr. Marjoe’s monasteries, as well as Mt. St. Mary’s in Wrentham, MA, where Hanne Berentsen, now Sr. Hanne-Maria, is a novice. Permission was given for Mariakloster’s furniture, etc. to be stored in Trondheim until a proper monastery, which requires six professed nuns, can be established. The cloister library has been left in the care of Egil Mogstad and the support group, who will find a suitable temporary home for it, where it will be available to those interested in learning more about Cistercian spirituality.

Two new biographies of Sigrid Undset have recently been published in Norway, both by Aschehoug. Menneskens Hjerte, by Tordis Ørsåsen, details with her novels, essays and articles, but most of all, with her life; it has been praised as the truest and best picture anyone has given of her. In Portrett av et Venndrap, Sunniva Hagenlund writes of the lifelong friendship between her father, illustrator and author Gösta af Geijerstam, and Undset. Geijerstam had also become a Catholic, due, in part, to Undset’s influence, and she was Sunniva’s godmother. As a child, Sunniva thought of her as a combination of Santa Claus and Our Lady. Although Undset and her father saw each other only infrequently, they kept up a lively correspondence, and Geijerstam preserved her letters; thus her daughter had a great deal of previously unpublished material available to her. Aftenposten’s Tone Myklebost (26 Sept., 1994, p. 16) calls it “another side of our Nobel prize winner.”

The Norwegian Bible Commission has issued a new Bible which contains everything which the Catholic Church considers canonical, though some parts of the Old Testament, not found in earlier Lutheran Bibles, are included as “apocrypha.” Thus all Norwegians, both Lutheran and Catholic, now have a common Bible. Broen 2, 1994. In the same issue of Broen there are obituaries for both our honorary patron, Bishop Jolson, S.J., and Jonn Dwight, our Bulletin editor for many years. John died just six weeks before Bishop Jolson; our last letter from the latter was one in which he expressed his sorrow over our loss of so dedicated and competent an editor, and so treasured a friend.

Marihaugen in Østfold, Norway is twenty-five years old this year. Built originally to provide Catholic young people with a suitable meeting center and summer camp, it now serves their age groups as well for workshops, seminars and retreats. Congratulations!

Astrid O’Brien

February 3rd

“PLEASE TELL OTHERS ABOUT THIS WORK”
On the first Sunday after Easter, Solemn Mass was said in all the congregations of the Diocese of Oslo to inaugurate the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the return of Catholicism to Norway. It was on the 16th April 1843 that Father Montz had established the parish of St. Olav in Oslo. On the 18th April 1993, Norwegian State Television transmitted a live coverage of the Solemn Mass in St. Olav's Cathedral. It was considered a dignified and successful broadcast from every point of view.

On the 7th May, the council of the City of Oslo invited the Diocese to a celebration of the Jubilee in the City Hall, followed by a reception given by the Mayor of the City. Several of the speeches which were given on this occasion have been printed in either "Broen" or "St. Olav". But unfortunately the beautiful music could only be enjoyed by those present.

His Majesty King Harald V honoured us with his presence at the combined Diocesan celebratory Mass in the Lutheran Cathedral of Oslo on the 8th May. The Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Lutheran Bishop of Oslo, Andreas Aarflot, and Dean Leif Ottersen were among the guests of honour. The parish council of the Cathedral had very kindly placed the Church of Our Saviour at our disposition. Elsewhere we were shown the same generosity: Stavanger and Kristiansand not only lent us their Cathedrals, but the Lutheran Bishops were themselves present during the Mass, and conveyed a welcome from the Lutheran State Church of Norway. The parish of St. Laurentius in Drammen was lent Bragernes Church and the parish of Saint Paul was lent the Cathedral in Bergen - to mention the most important.

In Northern Norway, the prelature of Tromsø, the celebrations took place at prelatical level in Harstad. In general one can say that the celebration of 150 years of Catholicism prompted much creativity and many enterprising ventures in parishes throughout the whole of Norway.

What gave us the greatest pleasure of all, and turned out to be an unforgettable experience for all those who took part, was the solemn celebration of the Holy Eucharist in the national shrine of Norway, Nidaros Cathedral, on the day of Olsok itself. Twelve Bishops, 47 priests and a host of altar servers formed the procession from St. Olav's Church, past the Archbishop's palace, to the Cathedral.

At the Altar of the Cross, where the Pope and the Bishop of Nidaros had knelt in prayer four years earlier, the acting Bishop of Nidaros greeted the Catholic Church and welcomed it to the celebration of the first Holy Mass there since the Reformation. The Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Giovanni Ceirano, conveyed greetings from His Holiness the Pope on this unique occasion.

It is difficult to find words to describe an experience such as this. The rest of the very successful programme in Trøndelag must find itself overshadowed by this great occasion. However, a special mention must be made of the Youth Festival which was so carefully prepared and faultlessly carried out by the Association of Catholic Youth of Norway.

The Jubilee Year brought us also an exhibition in the University Library in Oslo and a travelling exhibition which visited all the Parishes in turn. At the end of May a pilgrimage to Lourdes was arranged, and in October a group of 70 pilgrims went to Rome. In San Carlo al Corso we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the consecration of the Chapel of St. Olav, with its large altarpiece depicting the King and Saint. The boys' choir of St. Hallvard added a festive framework to this solemnity. During a private audience, the Pope encouraged the pilgrim group to bear witness with hope and joy to the Good News, and to remain faithful to the Christian values which have characterised Norway throughout the course of history.

It is easy to dwell on the external highlights of a jubilee year. Especially when they are painstakingly prepared and exemplarily carried out, they will be long remembered. But it is impossible to gauge the inner growth of faith, hope and love which we initially had hoped and prayed should be the result of the external celebrations during the year. God alone knows if this took place. But each and every one of us should spend some time in reflection and self-examination before we close this page of history. We pray that God will continue to hold His protecting hand over us when we again go forward in our everyday lives.

Bishop Gerhard Schwenzer SSCC of Oslo

Sweden

Pope John Paul visited the Baltic countries in September 1993. He warned against manifestations of national pride which could lead to disregard of human value. He reminded his listeners that the Baltic countries had a long multiracial experience. The day before his visit, the first Catholic school was begun with 30 students and five teachers. The school has been supported by Caritas Sweden and the Queen Astrid school in Gothenburg.

In Luleå, neighbours protested against the size of the addition to the Catholic church in that town. In Vimmerby, the Mass will be said once a month in the Baptist church. Catholics had found it difficult to find a place available for worship. About 700 persons attend the Polish Mass at St. John's Church in Stockholm on an ordinary Sunday. At present 91 children are receiving first communion training and 23-24 persons are being prepared for Confirmation. The problem of finding space for parish activities is acute. A historical house in Älmlult has been turned into a Catholic center with a chapel on the first floor. Älmlult is part of the Växjö parish. In Skellefteå in northern Sweden a
The Cathedral Parish In Stockholm Grows

When you fly into Stockholm on a clear evening, you have a beautiful overview of the far stretched city with its many lights. Looking more carefully, you see that around the center of the city many new housing developments have been built, they are often quite a long distance away from the center of town. This is because around Stockholm lie the skerries: large or small islands surrounded by water. The arms of the sea stretch deep into the land.

A large area south and east of the center of town belongs to the Cathedral parish. The parish of Södertälje lies to the southeast; it was organized by the German Salesians in 1966 and has a large membership with many immigrants.

At one time we thought that the good means of communication into the center of Stockholm made it easy for Catholics in the new suburbs to visit one of our three city parishes regularly. However, we have discovered that this was a vain hope. In the new suburbs, which have been built since 1950 and in which people by the tens of thousands now live, there are many Catholics who have no contact with existing parishes.

Therefore, the Cathedral parish put a permanent deacon in one of these locations and leased a place for him to have as an office and place for instruction. On Sunday, a priest celebrates the Holy Mass in a local Lutheran church.

This deacon has by now registered 60 baptisms. Only ten of these were from families known to the Cathedral parish. Many Catholics emerged and were surprised and happy that now in their own neighborhood the Sunday mass was celebrated regularly.

We needed to learn that the Catholic Christians in the new subdivisions around Stockholm did not make contact with the city parishes. The Church had to come to them.

In three different locations, new parishes are in process of being erected: in Fittja outside of Södertälje, in Saltsjö-Duvnäs and in Handen. However, how is a new parish established?

In Fittja the Catholic parish of Södertälje was able to rent a suitable room together with the Lutheran congregation. However, the Lutherans will soon move on.
So the Catholics have to move to a school room. By
themselves, they could not afford the rent. We are looking
for a building site where one day a church can be built in
Fittja.

The Polish Capuchins established themselves in Saltsjö-
Duvnäs and bought a house with their own means. They
have built a chapel in the basement. On the ground floor
there is a good parish room and the community of
Capuchins live on the upper floors. Catholics are able to
gather here – at present – in a rented church in the
neighborhood. More than 1,000 families are already
registered in the card index.

In Handen the Lutheran congregation approached us
with a proposal that we take over one of their three parish
centers. It is a large house, only 12 years old, with a large
chapel, a kindergarten, parish room and an apartment for a
priest. The Cathedral parish hopes to buy this center and
the diocese hopes to place a young priest there who can
develop the work of the permanent deacon and build up a
true parish.

In Europe, we are not used to seeing growing churches.
In many countries the Church is fading back. That is not
true in Sweden, thank God. Because of immigrants and
converts, the parishes in our diocese are growing.

A particular cause of happiness: the large Lutheran state
church does not find this development to be dangerous. On
the contrary, they are happy when the Catholic Church
discovers and gathers its faithful. The Lutheran pastor in
Handen has often said to me “Herr Bishop, you must send
a Catholic priest to Handen. There are many Catholics
there!”

On the whole, in Sweden we are a scattered flock, a
diaspora church. Only about 2% of the population is
Catholic. However the church enjoys great respect. Many
persons inquire with curiosity and interest.

The baptismal commission which we read at the end of
the Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 28.19 f.) is very relevant for
us.

Help us to seize all these opportunities, these
important tasks for our brothers in the faith in the
new suburbs of Stockholm.

Hubertus Brandenburg, Bishop of Stockholm

(In addition to the developing parishes to the south of
Stockholm, I (JEH) became aware this summer of the
centers of Catholic activity to the north of Stockholm in the
parish of St. Eugenia. About 1,000 Catholics live in the area
of Järfalla and plans have been developed for a church and
parish center to serve this community. There are four other
areas north of Stockholm where there are Catholic centers.
More about this next year.)

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Summer In Scandinavia

John Dwight began his annual travels to Scandinavia in
an effort to keep contact with the Catholic church of today
in those lands. He systematically visited the different
countries on a regular routine. Sometimes he met with
cooperation, sometimes not. I have tried to continue his
tradition but have not been able to be as regular as he
because of limits of time and money. This year I attempted
to reach areas that I had not seen or had not seen in recent
years.

Helsinki was for some time my point of departure. I was
there overnight and then flew to Tallinn, the capitol of
Estonia. Historically there are many close connections with
Estonia, and its language is quite closely related to Finnish.
Estonia suffered dreadfully during the German and Russian
occupations and it was only this year that the last Russian
troops left that country. The signs of decay and neglect are
everywhere. Invisible are the many Estonians who were
deployed by the Russians and have disappeared. Among
these were Swedes who had lived here since the
seventeenth century. Today work on rebuilding the city is
underway and, for a tourist, now may be the time to see it
before modern conformity sets its stamp on a lovely
although decayed Hanseatic town.

The religious history of Estonia (as Latvia) is
complicated. At the time of the reformation, it became
Lutheran under German control. Then the Polish came, then
the Swedes again, then the Russians, each with its own
religious influence. The Russification of the nineteenth
century produced some lovely Orthodox churches. From
this time also dates the rather plain Catholic church in the
Hanseatic part of Tallinn. The pastor was on vacation but Fr.
Gay Barbié from the cathedral in Helsingfors showed me
about. He said that the church was full each Sunday for
mass and that the congregation was very multinational.

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John Dwight
1912 - 1994

“PLEASE REMEMBER OUR WORK IN YOUR WILL”
I had heard that the Bridgittines had begun work in Tallinn and found four sisters living temporarily in the residence of the papal nuncio to Estonia. Mother Therese spent some time explaining the present situation of Catholics in Estonia. In addition to the church in Tallinn there are also churches or chapels in Tartu, Valga, Parnawa, and Ahtme. There is an Estonian who is about to be ordained. Much of the work is with Russians or Polish residents although there are Estonian Catholics and she reported that there have been several recent baptisms of Estonians.

The sisters are only temporarily in the present location and hope to begin work in the poor neighborhood surrounding the church in Tallinn. The future looks promising. In the middle ages, there was a Bridgettine convent near Tallinn at Pirita. There still is a ruin of this convent and property here has been promised to the sisters.

On the drive to Riga in Latvia, my driver pointed out that the cemeteries in Estonia and Latvia were always in groves. Is this a survival from the pagan groves?

The Catholics in Latvia constitute a sizeable minority of the population. The part of Latvia which was under Polish rule remained Catholic up to the time of national independence in this century. The Catholic Cathedral in Riga appears to be part of a medieval church. When I went to mass on Sunday, it was crowded with people reading their beads. I think the mass was said in Polish, but I understood the drift of the sermon which dealt with the annual seminary appeal and such cultural monuments have not suffered inculturation.

CARMELITES AND AN EASTERN RITE CENTER

I very much wanted to visit the Carmelites from California who have come to Finland. I had thought it would be an easy visit as they live in Espaa which is a suburb of Helsingfors. I got on the bus to Espaa Centrum and then discovered I was nowhere near my goal which was far out in the country, across the road from a nature conservancy.

There are five sisters in the convent which is housed in an old, charming farmhouse on a plot of a few acres. Mother Virginia introduced me to the three other sisters in residence (one sister was not at home) and showed me their plans for a more permanent convent. It will be built adjacent to their present house and yet will satisfy their need for enclosure. The sisters have taken to gardening, and lunch consisted almost entirely of their own produce. It was interesting to note their relationship with their Finnish neighbors. One of them has been helping them with the Finnish language and one young woman in the neighborhood is interested in becoming Catholic and a Carmelite. The sisters told me that the Carmelites at Gumslöv in Sweden are adding on to their convent to solve their severe lack of space. They also told me that the young Norwegian man I met on my last trip was now with the Carmelite brothers.

Down the bosky country road is the ecumenical center of Fr. Robert de Caluwe who was born in Holland. Fr. Caluwe has built an Eastern Rite chapel and furnished it with icons which he has painted. Here he works to mediate between Western and Eastern European Christianity. Among other things, he teaches icon painting and Eastern theology. Father is a delightful person and visitors to Finland would enjoy meeting this joyful human.

FINNISH SCHOLARS

A League member, Dr. Birgit Klockars, has had a fascinating life. Her earliest memories are of Vasa and the coastal Swedish Finnish towns. Her parents belonged to the intellectual circle of the time in which church going was not particularly important. In time, she became involved in the Salvation Army with its demand for personal faith and conviction. From 1935 to 1948 she lived in China and worked with orphans. When she came home to Scandinavia, she discovered the importance of the sacraments and the liturgical life which was developing in Sweden at that time. In 1948, she returned to China with Norwegian Lutherans to work in a children's home and stayed there until the civil war forced her return to Finland in 1950. Through a combination of reading and personal relationships she was drawn into the Catholic church where she appreciated the centrality of the sacraments and the church's ability to "make religion, the life of faith, part of

Fr. Robert de Caluwe

"PRAY FOR SCANDINAVIA"
everyday life.' Much of this is discussed in her fascinating autobiography, *Ett År: Ett Liv*. Still to come was her career as a Birgitta scholar and her continuing role as a Christian spokesman in the Finnish media.

Part of my delightful visit to Dr. Klockars was spent discussing various aspects of Birgitta scholarship. Before her time, this had often been based on rather loose, romanticizing concepts. Dr. Klockars has been single mindedly factual in her research. Her most important study concerns the literary sources of Birgitta’s writings. Unfortunately it is out of print and has never been translated into English. Even more time was spent discussing her love for her parish, St. Mary’s, and the Chinese speaking refugees to Finland who continue to mean so much to her.

Another League member, Dr. Robert Rinehart, gave me an introduction to Drs. Torsten and Helena Edgren. We met at the National Museum and I was introduced to its medieval collections. We then went to lunch and fascinating discussions. Dr. Torsten Edgren had spent a recent summer doing archaeological digs in Greenland and we discussed how one survives miles away from the nearest store. Dr. Helena Edgren has written a book on the depictions of miracles of the Blessed Virgin in Finland. This branches out into a discussion of the general iconography of Mary in the late middle ages. Dr. Helena had recently met Sigrid Undset’s daughter and we began a too short discussion of the great Norwegian Catholic.

**NORTHWARD**

I have long hoped to see northern Scandinavia and thought I could manage a trip around the inlet. I got to Oulu where I saw the state church cathedral which has the only portrait of Messenius done during his lifetime. Messenius (d. 7536) was a Swedish Catholic historian who, for his faith, but my camera refused to register his portrait.

There is a Catholic church in the outskirts of Oulu which I found with great difficulty. The priest did not speak English or Swedish so contact was difficult but it would be interesting to know more about Catholic life so far removed from Catholic centers.

**TO SWEDEN**

At this point, the trip became too difficult and I took a train south to Vasa and then a delightful sunny boat ride to Sundsvall in Sweden. Another member, Barbro Lindqvist, generously took a day to show me that area. Sundsvall is a relatively modern town, growing up as a result of the timber industry. Fairly early there were Catholics living there and in Sorforsa. A house was bought as a Catholic center in Sundsvall with a provisory chapel on the first floor. Several years ago an attractive addition to the house provided a church which seats 90 but can be enlarged by opening several doors. A young Polish priest, Zbigniew Golabiewski, and the St. Joseph sisters serve the parish. As usual, this also involves chapels scattered over a wide area. Father said he enjoyed these trips which have always seemed overwhelming to me.

We then travelled through the countryside. The ruins of a church at Selånger mark the place where St. Olav is said...
to have begun his march to Sticklestad and martyrdom. The Church at Ålno boasts particularly fine frescos, the ceiling never having been whitelined. The great Finnish and Swedish hymn writer, Frans Mikael Franzen, was pastor for many years at Sabra and his gentle spirit still seemed to wander in this rural parson. The cathedral at Härnösand was built when he was bishop there and he had wanted it to be light and airy. So it is and it reflects the grecian atmosphere of that old center of learning. After a meal in the gracious apartment of Judge Lindqvist, we returned to Sundsvall and began the trip to Stockholm.

**STOCKHOLM**

As most of my time was spent in Finland and points east, I lacked time to see most of the people I usually visit. However, the ever gracious Bishop Brandenburg shared some time with me to discuss the situation of the Church in Sweden and America. I have asked him to report on new churches in his letter. I was happy to note that the training of priests proceeds apace and that there are a number of candidates. The need to reach immigrants remains important. I spent some time with Helga Larsson discussing what St. Ansgar's can do for English speaking immigrants and visitors.

Our good friend, Father Rune Thuring, spent a day showing me what is happening in the Stockholm area. The day began with a mass said by him at the Josephina Hemmet in Bromma. It was attended by old people from the home but also by neighbors. We then began a long day. At Marsta we visited the Dominican Sisters and were welcomed by Sister Catharina Broome. In 1989 she received an honorary doctorate at Uppsala University and delivered a lecture on the history of Dominicans in Sweden. It seemed appropriate to see the medieval Dominican Church in Sigtuna. Sister Catharina pointed out that it was the Dominicans who introduced brick churches to Scandinavia.

Lunch was at the Jesuit house where I met the new pastor of St. Eugenia, Stefan Dartman, a most gracious host. Then we set off to see Our Lady's Church in Täby. The pastor, Clyde Rausch, was in America but we were welcomed by the newly ordained Father Fredrik Emanuelsson. The flowers from his ordination still decorated the church and he showed that enthusiasm which we hope the newly ordained will never lose.

Americans who have visited the Brigittines in Darien, Connecticut, will feel at home in Djursholm as the scenery is very similar. The sisters operate a large guest house and also offer retreats through the year.

I have skipped a number of experiences and apologize for this, I also apologize to those who I had no time to visit. I would, however, like to add a word of thanks to Lars and Marta Fagrell who, in truth and unity, came to the airport and saw me through those last, tense moments before departure. There are so many people to thank that I do so in closing. Tusen tack, Kittos.

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**Diary of a Pilgrim Monk**

From my very first moment in Sweden, the land's people and its past and present were a fascination. It was July 20, 1992. Air fares had been better than usual, so many Swedes had come to the United States to visit relatives and now they were returning home. I was with them, but my purpose—at least in part—was reversed. I was coming to Sweden, if not to find relatives, at least to find my roots—to find, if possible, the town where my grandfather had come from when he left Sweden in 1870 for the United States. We descended from the plane at 9:00 o'clock on a clear, sunny morning at the airport between Stockholm and Uppsala.

Father Caesarius was there, as he had said he would be. I had worried that I would not recognize him, but there was no problem: the familiar Benedictine habit he was wearing caught my nervous eye immediately. His serious face, intense and smiling eyes, and his very gracious and vivacious manner were a splendid welcome to this land of the north.

In moments we were in the car and off for Uppsala, where several errands had to be run before going to the monastery near Sala. At the first stop Father Caesarius took his computer in for repair and I wandered around outside, amazed to see the same kind of tree and plant life I had just left in Oregon: birch trees, horse chestnuts, rhododendron, potentillas, clematis. Then on into the heart of the city, where Father Caesarius tended to more errands and I visited two magnificent churches. The great cathedral, with its towering twin spires, was begun in 1275, it is the largest cathedral in Scandinavia and is a classic northern gothic structure, with powerful uplifting lines both inside and out. The church was filled with visitors, both native Swedes and foreigners, and I was delighted to be among them. Two historic treasures I would come upon here. In a chapel far up to the left of the sanctuary were the relics of King St. Eric, who ruled this land in its early Christian days. He was killed on Ascension Day in 1160 as he came out from Mass in the earlier church. In the midst of noisy tourists I found a place for a quick prayer for his intercession, for I was not here only in search of my roots, but I was also on a pilgrimage. Turning around, I found in the floor of this same chapel the tomb of the pious parents of St. Bridget—from the early 14th century! The sense of history that would accompany me throughout the journey was already facing me straight on.

Not far from the cathedral is a much smaller Romanesque church dedicated to the Holy Trinity and antedating the cathedral by about 100 years. In Old
Uppsala, where I next found myself, we visited an even earlier church, built between 1000 and 1100 A.D. Inside this small ancient church is the bishop’s throne, dating from around 1200, used by Pope John Paul II when he offered Mass near this church a few years ago.

On then to the monastery. Father Caesarius is the superior of this small community of Benedictine monks who belong to the Church of Sweden. Centuries ago Sweden was dotted with monasteries, but these were all closed in the 16th century when the country’s faith became Lutheran. This present monastic community, then, is unique. Only recently has the Church of Sweden given any official recognition to the existence of religious communities. But there is no question about the Benedictine identity of these men. “Work and Pray” is certainly their lived motto. The Divine Office begins with Vigils at 4:00 a.m., and all the Hours follow at their proper time during the day. It was a great blessing for me to be asked to join the monks in their prayer. The psalms — so naturally familiar — were, then, my introduction to the new language. (I should note Father Caesarius and most Swedes speak English perfectly, so my linguistic introduction into a new culture was an easy one!)

The monks also sing the community Mass each day, and during the Prayer of the Faithful they pray without fail for Christian unity and for the Holy Father. Ecumenism is one of the main intellectual and theological concerns of Father Caesarius.

The next day I was already on my way to another historical spot. The Benedictine nuns at Vadstena had made arrangements for me to stay with the Catholic Bridgettine nuns there in the town where that remarkable woman, St. Bridget, had established her monastery in 1344. These contemporary Bridgettines have a beautiful modern church, a guesthouse and their own monastery — all near the great Abbey Church (now belonging to the Church of Sweden) built in the early 1400s according to the specifications left by St. Bridget. Because Catholic churches are so few in Sweden, the nuns’ church is used daily and on Sundays by the Catholics from some distance around.

The Bridgettines welcomed me very warmly and treated me with extraordinary kindness during my four-day stay. They also invited me into their choir, so I was able to pray the Divine Office with them, too, in Swedish. Thank God for the psalm — our common prayer around the world! The 23rd of July was the feast of St. Bridget and I was in the perfect place to celebrate the feast. After Office and Mass with the Bridgettines, I went over to the great gothic church and watched the Lutherans celebrate the feast with a High Mass. The organ rang out and the church — large as it is — was filled with the powerful Lutheran hymns. After this, Father Lars, a priest from Denmark who spends his vacation weeks acting as chaplain for the Catholic sisters in the area, took me to visit the Benedictine nuns only a couple of blocks away from the Bridgettines.

This Benedictine community, recently received in its entirety into the Catholic Church, has as yet no monastery and so must live and pray in several small houses. With Father Lars I con-celebrated Mass for the sisters and then visited with Mother Birgitta and Sister Anna. Among the things I learned here was the depth of devotion these sisters have to Mary. Before they became Catholics, their community was known in the Lutheran Church as the Daughters of Mary. Their spirituality is rooted in the practice of imitating Mary in her perfect adherence to the will of God.

Because of Sweden’s shortage of Catholic priests, neither the Bridgettines nor the Benedictines — even though both communities are contemplative — are able to have Mass every day. The Bridgettines promised me much cheese — and even a cow! — if I would stay to be their chaplain. The temptation was strong, but I overcame it, realizing Abbot Peter would probably come over and bring me home.

Before leaving this beautiful little town on the shore of the enormous Lake Vättern, Father Lars took me to see the ruins of the 12th century Cistercian monastery where St. Bridget’s husband died and where she herself stayed for some time. This was the first Cistercian abbey in Sweden, founded in 1143. The Prior Peter who transcribed St. Bridget’s revelations was a member of this monastic community. It is possible now to wander all around the grounds there and see parts of the various monastic buildings, including the abbey church. Archaeologists, perhaps students, appear to have been working on the site for many years and the work still goes on.

The time had now come to catch the train northward for my return to the monastery near Sala. Many of the sisters came to say farewell. Sister Patricia came with a delightful gift and card from the young sisters, and Mother Karen gave me a bag of treats to enjoy on the train. I shall not forget my stay among the wonderful Bridgettines at Vadstena.

The forests and lakes, which abound all over Sweden, were my companions through the train windows as I journeyed to Sala. Brother Anders was waiting at the station for me, and we drove through farmland, stopping at a local farmer’s barn for fresh milk for the community. It was pleasant to be back among the monks at Östanbäcks Klostér, as it is officially known.

Then, at Father Caesarius’ invitation, I accompanied him to Rättvik, some distance to the north and west. We drove through the beautiful green and hilly Swedish countryside. Our purpose was to attend a series of ecumenical meetings held at St. David’s Garden, a retreat house in Rättvik.
Representatives of both the Church of Sweden and the Catholic Church, lay and clerical, were present; bishops from each were there, too, for part of the time. The friendly, open attitude of all was impressive, as was the strong concern for a return to Christian unity.

I left Rättvik on Sunday morning, August 2nd, after offering Mass for about 20 people in the tiny St. Dominic's Catholic chapel on the great grounds. A very pleasant young couple who had been attending the meetings drove me to the station, and I was indeed very grateful for their kindness, since it was raining heavily. I was off on pilgrimage again. This time I would step over into Norway to visit the great church at Trondhjem and pray at the shrine of St. Olav. For centuries all of Scandinavia has made pilgrimage to pray at this shrine of the 11th century Christian king.

The great gothic cathedral was a marvelous sight! Although much restoration has gone on in this century, the building is from the 12th century. Its thick, dark stone walls and exterior sculpture are an excellent example of gothic architecture. Inside, the building is massive and yet lovely with the delicate stone carvings.

Father Caesarius had arranged for me to visit one of the brothers of the community who had become a Catholic and had permission to live and work in the far — really! — north.

After a very long ride in a train crowded with hikers and their backpacks, I arrived at Kiruna. Brother John Lindell welcomed me as he picked me up at the station. Kiruna is a hundred or so miles above the Arctic Circle, and it was fascinating to be so far north! While there, I stayed in Brother John’s apartment, and while he was at work I saw sights I never thought I would see. Coming out from deep inside a mountain where I had seen the world’s largest iron mine, we came upon two herds of reindeer pasturing on the nearby hillsides. I saw, too, a famous church, designed early this century after the form of the Laplander’s hut. Thirty years ago I had read about this interesting wooden church, and had been fascinated by it then. I had long since, however, forgotten about it until now, when it startled me there in Kiruna! Here in the far north I also experienced the usual summer daylight and the short summer nights.

From up here in the far, far north it was now a long ride back to Sala. I left at 2:45 in the afternoon and arrived the next morning around 8:00 o’clock. Brother Anders was faithfully there again, waiting to pick me up, and soon I was back at Östanbäcks Kloster — though not for long. An opportunity almost immediately arose for me to go see the city of Västerås, and I was off. Västerås is another beautiful city, a ways south from Sala, with another ancient and beautiful church from the “Catholic times,” as they said. The church is Baltic gothic, and tastefully modernized, I was particularly struck by the beautiful, ancient crucifix (13th century, I think) and the lovely statue of Our Lady, as well as the three pipe organs.

At 4:30 Brother Michael was there to pick me up and back we headed to the monastery. This will be my last night with the monks at Östanbäcks Kloster.

They have certainly received this wandering American monk as Christ himself would have been received. St. Benedict is undoubtedly proud of their fine monastic observance. I have seen much, much more of Sweden than I ever would have dared to hope, and all is due to the kindness and generosity of Father Caesarius and this community. Even now, as I leave for Stockholm, he has arranged for me to stay while there at a Catholic retirement home and replace his brother who is chaplain there and a Catholic monsignor in the diocese of Stockholm. My prayer is that God will bless this little Church of Sweden monastery in every way.

After prayer, Mass, and breakfast, the next morning, busy as they all were, the monks gathered for me to take their picture. Then heavy suitcases in hand, I was off to the station and on my way to Stockholm.

As the city neared, suburbs indicated that this was a metropolis. I found over the next ten days that it is a strikingly beautiful city — the Venice of the north, it is called, because Stockholm is a city of 14 islands. There is water everywhere.

I will be here for several days, ten, in fact, and will wander the streets, visit churches, chat with the auxiliary bishop, take bus rides around the city and a boat ride, too. At the time of my stay, Stockholm is having a “water festival,” so the city is even more alive with people than usual. My temporary home is the guest suite in the Josefina Hemmet, a Catholic retirement home established by Catholic Queen Josefine some hundred or so years ago. It is now run by a group of Polish sisters, who speak excellent Polish (I imagine) and fine Swedish (again I presume), but no English. I am to offer Mass daily for them and for the residents who wish to come. The dilemma is solved by agreeing to have Mass in Latin, with a few attempts to insert the bit of Swedish I have learned. At the end of my stay I find that it has all worked out fine.

DIARY OF A PILGRIM MONK - II

In my wanderings around the busy and beautiful city of Stockholm I set out to find two particular churches. The historic St. Eugenia’s Church, completed in 1837, was the first Catholic church in Sweden since the Reformation days. The present church, completed in 1891, replaces the original which was unfortunately swallowed up in an extensive urban renewal project. This church, hidden behind the interesting facade of a nineteenth-century business building, is pleasantly modern and yet is also clearly an expression of the parish’s history. It happened that, as my curiosity led me into the church, daily Mass was in progress, so I joined the 75 or so worshippers, many of whom were young people in their mid-twenties.

Among the many facilities connected with the church is an excellent Catholic bookstore. While browsing in the extensive English section, I found my Stockholm souvenir, a paperback copy of The Life and Revelations of St. Gertrude. This book was to accompany me throughout my journey and be a handy lectio book for me.

The other church I was searching for was St. Erik’s Cathedral. What I found was a most interesting church. Some years ago the Catholic population outgrew the quaint little church of the late 19th century. The solution to
the space problem was to add a large modern structure to the old church and to form one building by connecting them through the sanctuary of the old cathedral. The two buildings are one, with good visibility of the altar from the old or the new sections. It was a privilege for me to concelebrate Mass in this cathedral on the solemnity of Our Lady’s Assumption. The celebrant, a native Swede with a fine voice, sang the prayers of the Mass, as well as the preface, and the choir and people sang their parts in Gregorian chant.

Earlier in my journey, while at the ecumenical meetings in Rättvik, Kerstin Rydberg had invited me to visit her town of Strängnäs and there to see another church - this one consecrated in the year 1291! The building itself, with its fine northern gothic lines and brick exterior, certainly is a treasure. Within the church, though, are yet more treasures: frescos from as far back as 1340; the magnificent intricately carved, gilded reliefs behind the high altar from 1490, depicting the passion and death of our Lord; the large bronze baptismal font from the 1300's with the Latin Ave Maria inscribed around it; the statues of our Lady and St. Erik from before 1500, and more!

On Tuesday, August 18, I concelebrated Mass with Monsignor Cavallin at the Josefina Hemmet. After breakfast in his apartment and a very pleasant conversation about the Church in Sweden, I lugged my heavy suitcases to the subway, helped by Francesco, a young Chilean immigrant who, with his family, moved to Sweden seven years ago.

Eventually I arrive at the pier and find myself astounded at the size of the ship. Never have I seen a ship so long! I board, take the ship elevator down to my level, and find my tiny but well-arranged cabin. There will be three of us in here. I enjoy the sights from the top deck as we pass through the archipelago, enjoy a good meal, then retire to the cabin to pray, read, and sleep.

I rise in the morning, shower and shave, have a fine breakfast of Swedish and American food, and go to the top deck again to stand facing into the wind as the ship moves through the waters. What a picture as we pass through the hundreds of islands and I then recognize the great landmarks of Helsinki! The ship docks and I put foot on another of the northern lands.

The day is gray and drizzly, but I am excited to be in Finland — and a bit nervous. I must call Mrs. Aalto, wife of the architect who designed our fine library at Mount Angel, and the Carmelite sisters at Espoo. I wonder: Will everyone here speak English as they did in Sweden?

Off I go on my own, Finlandia Hall, the enormous concert and conference center designed by Alvar Aalto, was my primary destination. A touch of frustration clouded my mood as time went on and the drizzle continued and the building was not to be found! Quite suddenly, however, I found myself directly in front of the Temppeliaukio Church. The experience of facing this famous building was much like the experience I had in northern Sweden when suddenly I saw the Kiruna church. The church is carved right into the massive rock formation in Temppeliaukio Square in central Helsinki. A huge copper dome with 180 skylights covers the entire church. It has a beautiful, Scandinavian-simple sanctuary and altar and a large organ in modern design.

The Carmelite Community of Espoo (left to right): Sisters Klaara Maria, Susanna, Mary Edol, Maria Monia & Virginia

it was a short walk to the hall, which is an immense building. After viewing it from the outside and enjoying the fine, clean lines and the shining white marble, I take a formal tour of the inside of the building. The Aalto character is clear and I recognize in this building some of the Aalto features of our library at Mount Angel, especially the spaciousness and the use of natural light.

The next adventure is awaiting me. So I leave Finlandia Hall and hurry on in a rain that has become decidedly more than a drizzle.

By the time I find the right car at the train station I am soaked. Oregon has nothing on the Scandinavian countries as far as rain is concerned! I find my seat and soon the train for Espoo departs. It is a short trip; in 46 minutes we are there. A reluctant taxi driver finally agrees to drive me to the Carmelite monastery somewhere out in the woods beyond the city. My purpose in coming to Espoo has been precisely to visit the nuns here. As I am watching the meter, the driver is searching for the monastery. Eventually, after a long and expensive ride and a quick inquiry at an ecumenical center, we find the fine old Finnish farmhouse that is now the nuns’ monastery. The welcome given me by Mother Virginia was warm — and in English! She is from California. Almost immediately I celebrate Mass for the sisters in their very attractive little chapel, formerly the living and dining room of the farmhouse.

Finally Mother Virginia says that they really must pray Compline. From my place in the chapel I listen to the slow, gentle rhythmic sounds of Finnish prayer and am deeply moved by its quiet beauty. Compline was then the only office they prayed in Finnish; the others were in English. After Compline I retire to the little space that has been, with Carmelite ingenuity, sacristy, sitting room, dining room, visitor’s parlor, and now my bedroom.

After a fine night’s rest, it is time to rise, pray and then celebrate Mass. Mass, with the sisters singing the soft Taize music in this quiet setting of a Finnish forest seen...
through the windows, is very prayerful and reverent. It is a good day, even though the sky is gray. Mass is followed by a healthy Finnish breakfast, a parting visit and pictures.

On the train back to Helsinki I reflect on this Carmelite interlude. It was wonderfully refreshing. Finland has few Catholics — only about 5,000 in the whole county. These intrepid women of prayer came from their various monasteries in three different countries in 1988 to begin this place of contemplative prayer. The local people have fully accepted them. They are quiet missionaries of the faith and remain firmly planted in my memories of Finland.

It was a particular mission that led me to Finland, and that was to deliver two copies to Mrs. Aalto of the newly published book on our library at Mount Angel. Before leaving the U.S. arrangements had been made for me to meet Mrs. Aalto today, August 20.

The time quickly comes to find a taxi to take me to the Aalto offices. Although I begin to panic (no new experience for me), a taxi is easily found and in minutes I am being received by the secretary, who introduces me to Mrs. Aalto, who welcomes me to both Finland and the Aalto offices. Then she invites me up the stairs to a large room filled with models of Aalto buildings, including one of the Mount Angel Abbey Library. There she offers me lunch: Finnish open-faced sandwiches, tea, and pastries. We chat about her husband, departed now for some years, about the library at home, about the Abbey exhibit of Aalto furniture, and about Aalto buildings in general. She paged through the book I had brought, stopping every so often to comment on things or persons the pictures called to her mind. She enjoyed the book and seemed very glad that I had brought it to her. Our pleasant visit lasted about 45 minutes. As I was getting ready to leave, she had her secretary call a taxi for me, and then she graciously gave me several recent publications on Aalto and his buildings and furniture.

My plan for this journey-pilgrimage was to visit many different places. Looking back now, I am very happy to have visited them. Along with the places, though, I find memories of wonderful people I met in these places. I had no idea when planning the journey, that so many people would briefly enter my life, to remain forever in my memories. One of these is the taxi driver who took me from the Aalto offices back to the dock.

Since I had time, he drove me by some of his favorite buildings in Helsinki. St. Mary's Catholic church was among the buildings he pointed out. To this church, he told me, he used to bring every Sunday an American from the U.S. embassy for Mass. The Catholic cathedral he also pointed out. Finally this fine man dropped me off at the dock, and as he took my suitcases from the trunk of the car, he told me poignantly that he prays every day for his daughter who lives in Toronto and who suffers from multiple sclerosis. I promised him that I too would pray for her. He wished me goodbye and I thanked him. Yes, the people are as much a part of my memories as are the places!

It was about three hours before the ship was to begin the return voyage to Sweden. There was time, then, to find St. Henry's Cathedral, which the taxi driver had pointed out to me. It was only a few blocks from the dock. Previously I had visited the Catholic cathedrals in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, so there was a sense of completing a picture as I happily entered the Catholic cathedral of Finland. It is a small building, dedicated to the patron saint of the country, St. Henry. It is clean and dignified, though, it seemed to me a bit bare after its obvious renovation.

I got back to the dock and boarded the ship, which would leave at 6:30 p.m. and arrive the next morning at 8:30 in Stockholm. After finding my cabin, I went to the top deck to say goodbye to Helsinki. It is a city of many churches. I wish I could have visited more of them, especially the great Orthodox cathedral, so clearly visible here from the ship. However, I am content, having visited the little red-brick, neo-gothic St. Henry's Cathedral and the unusual Temppeliaukio church. Slowly the ship moves out into the sea and I am bound again for Sweden.

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Travels With John - 1963

On to the Catholic church (St. Vincenti) whose architecture creditably blends with its more ancient predecessors but whose interior furnishings, although not Barklay Street, leave much to be desired.

Fr. d'Auchamp has been offered a new parish for him to start alone in the Copenhagen suburb of Søborg... Bishop Suhr suggests that he finance a church by continuing leading his tours to Italy and the Holy Land.

Fr. — frankly admits he doesn't know Danish and expressed no intention of taking it up... He may turn out to be like one of those American missionaries who used to teach baseball to all their foreign charges instead of learning the native games!

(In Turku) I looked up the Catholic chapel, St. Mary's (?) which is on Ureirkikatu. It is only a wooden house, 1 1/2 stories like all the wooden houses here, painted yellow. The chapel has pews for 56 comfortably (60 if crowded.)

The American Sisters of the Precious Blood arrived in Finland in '39 - only to have the Winter War break out. They had planned an English School but the authorities said to wait till after the war (if the Germans had won there would be no point in it), but the Dutch sisters had been recalled, so the Precious Blood sisters took care of their hostel and camp during the war. Then in '46 they could start their English School.

"PLEASE TELL OTHERS ABOUT THIS WORK"
Fr. Holzer tells of the kindergarten at Tampere-how he went abroad and contracted for its building on the mistaken understanding that the bishop had 1/2 the money. So H. goes to some sisters in Holland and with an urgent appeal borrows $10,000 from them. With this he buys tulip bulbs. He asks Rome if this is O.K. (Pope Pius gave him $7,000 to buy oranges to sell in Finland). He had to sell the bulbs and oranges at a price set by the government but even so sold them for $50,000.

(In Stockholm) Bishop Taylor's next trip inside Sweden will take him to Glimåkra where the Carmelites have asked him to legislate or decide various points, e.g. whether their washing the outside of their windows would break their enclosure.

A city official (when St. Eugenia was being relocated) told Fr. Hornung that "You should thank your god whom I (the city official) don't believe in, in getting the Catholics such a fine site, past which we have to walk even if we don't want to."

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**A New Priest For The Mission**

On the feast of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the hands were laid upon the head of the young Oblate Missionary of Mary Immaculate, Fredrik Emanuel, and he was ordained to the sacred priesthood by H.E. Bishop Hubertus Brandenburg.

This was truly a big day for everyone involved and present at the Ordination as not only was the Church in Sweden blessed by a new channel for the transmission of grace, but it was a young Swede who in this way made himself available to the Universal Church.

The universality of the little parish of Our Lady in Täby, outside Stockholm, became obvious in the course of the liturgy. We heard music from Vietnam, priests came from Italy, Germany, the U.S. Denmark, Vietnam, Spain, Sweden. The Bridgettine sisters from Djursholm sang the Responsorial psalm and other members of the parish sang a Byzantine style Alleluia.

Noticeable among the guests was the present Papal nuncio to the Nordic countries, who also gave a speech at the lunch afterwards. He said among many things that he hoped Father Fredrik would show the people in Sweden the way to Immanuel - God with us. He thus played with Father Fredrik's family name - Emanuel.

Strictly speaking, Father Fredrik will remain a member of the U.S. Central province of his order, into which he entered eight years ago, and the province was duly represented by the Provincial, Father Kettle, who expressed his great delight to be a part of this celebration.

Bishop Brandenburg in his turn expressed how much he has learned to like Fredrik by telling Father Kettle: "Don't you dare to remove Fredrik from Sweden!" We are many who would like to agree with Bishop Brandenburg, as Sweden still in many respects is as much in need of an Oblate Missionary as ever before. Let us hope that God in his providence will give this country and more young men who are waiting to follow the Lord as priests.

Fredrik joined the Catholic Church when he was still at school and was soon to be noted for his energy for work, his perseverance in learning more about our faith and his skill in making friends. After fulfilling his national service as an officer in a Swedish elite regiment he entered the novitiate in the U.S.

Academic studies and favored places for Father Fredrik's priestly formation were first Dublin where he studied for three years, obtaining a Bachelor of Philosophy degree, and then Rome and the Gregorian University at which he duly received his STB.

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**Books**

**THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN NORWAY**

As part of the observance of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the first Catholic Church in Norway after the reformation, Norwegian Catholics planned a major history of the faith. Beginning with Viking times and continuing to the present. Unfortunately it was published too late for the celebration last summer, but it remains a worthy monument to that celebration. Edited by Bishop Gran, it is constructed like a sandwich with a section "From Christianizing to The Reformation" by Vera Henriksen, "The Underground Church 1537-1914" written by Oskar Garstein, and "The Catholic Church Returns" by Fr. Bernt Eidsvig.
Lectures On
Saint Birgitta

Cardinal Ratzinger discussed the writings of Birgitta as being a “female theology” which has its own validity besides the male scholastic tradition. The argument is very closely developed and we can only wonder at the consequences of a more serious look at the female writers of the middle ages as theologians. Some of the other essays are of less value but we are indebted to the Bridgetine sisters for printing these proceedings.


Vikings And
_The Sign Of The Cross_

For some time I have been asked if I had seen the book on _Primsigningsriten_ (the first blessing of converts) which was published in Finland. I had to acknowledge my ignorance and it is only now, finding the book in a secondhand book store in Finland, that I can redress my ignorance. It is a most important monograph. The practice of making the sign of the cross on the person to be baptized which still begins the rite of baptism is traced from its first appearance through the medieval ages to present day usage in the “folk” churches of modern Scandinavia. In the course of the development, we also learn much about the Vikings. A more careful reading of the Life of Ansarg would show some lapses in scholarship but it seems to me that the author’s sketch is basically correct.

The book is concerned with explaining how the Vikings “were not baptized and did not definitely go over to the new faith but were content to be signed with the Christian cross.” Before the eighth century the North had little contact with the Christian culture to its south and west. It was the growth of trade with Islam which was to bring northern Europe into contact with the outside world. First the Frisians and then the Scandinavians were engaged in the sale of furs and slaves to the Islamic countries. The Viking raids have attracted more attention than has trade. In the life of Ansarg, pirate activities are not neglected but the trading cities of Birka and Dorstad e.g. are central.

The religion of the North was not dogmatic but centered in sacrifice and cult. The gods were important because they were useful, primarily in protecting their cults from evil. All of the nordic gods were immanent, they were not almighty but shared human fate and death. Thus there grew up in the north a kind of atheism in which a person trusted in his own strength to achieve “peace and the fullness of life.”

As the Church developed and adapted baptism to the various situations which it met, the practice of signing the convert with the sign of the cross came to mean that the candidate “participated in the blessings of Christ’s sacrificial death.” The catechumen was not a full member of the church but he could observe the Christian rites and begin to be taught more fully the faith.

The Viking was interested in the new religion because it seemed spiritually or materially useful to him. By being...
signed, he was able to have relations with other Christians. It was hoped that at some point he would be baptized and live the Christian life. The author claims that many who are said to be baptized in the sagas were probably only signed with the cross. The danger of the practice was that it could be equated with the various mystical signs of the pagan gods and the necessity of baptismal preparation and living a Christian life be forgotten.

The book contains a fine Bibliography, most of which is unavailable to the American reader. I have stressed some of the points which are relevant to the readings from *Vita Anskari* but the section on post-reformation practice is highly interesting.

If you can read Swedish, search and read.

Sandholm, Åke (1965) *Primsingsriten Under Nordisk Medeltid,

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**St. Brigitta’s Guest House In Rome**

In the heart of Rome one finds St. Brigitta’s Guest House which has served Scandinavian travellers for 600 years. When St. Brigitta and her daughter, Blessed Katharine, the founder of the Brigittine Order lived there for 20 years from 1353-1373, the main entrance faced west to the Tiber River. Now the main entrance faces south onto the Piazza Farnese which prides itself on a great architectural treasure along its west side, the Palazzo Farnese by Sangallo and Michelangelo, today the French Embassy.

Casa Brigitta is now the motherhouse of the reorganized Brigittine Order. The Mother General and her five councilors live here for their respective six year terms after their election by the General Council. They oversee the work of the order carried on by the approximately 500 nuns in 24 houses in Italy, Sweden, England, USA, India, Mexico, Switzerland, Finland and, since January 1994, Estonia. Also there are the postulants and novices for the two first year terms, at present 15 young women. They must annually renew their vows four more times and finally after six years they become fully professed.

The process for the beatification of Mother Elizabeth Hasselblad began on July 5, 1988, and the Brigittines are hoping that it might happen in 1995 or 1996. Mother Elizabeth was born in Sweden on June 4, 1870 and came to New York as a young woman in 1887. While working as a nurse at Roosevelt Hospital and feeling that her Lutheran faith was not the true answer, she searched for more meaning in life. This led her to Fr. Hagen, a Jesuit, and her conversion in 1902.

She began to rebuild the Brigittine Order first in Rome in 1911 and bought the Casa Brigitta in 1931. Your author had the happy experience of meeting Mother Elizabeth during a visit to Rome and St. Brigitta’s Guest House in July 1950.

The guest house has 23 rooms most with two and some with three beds. Guests come for bed and breakfast, but can have half or full board if they wish. A few of the windows look out on the Piazzas and the Palazzo Farnese. The Brigittine buildings which are in good order are being architecturally restored as funds become available.

There are six chapels.

Downstairs is a chapel for those of the Lutheran faith where the Lutheran liturgy is celebrated every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. for Swedes and Finns.

On the main floor is the main chapel, the nuns’ choir chapel where they sing the office four times a day and the Chapel of Saint Richard Reynolds, a Brigittine priest and monk from the Brigittine Syon Abbey who was martyred in 1535 by Henry VIII during the same period as Thomas More and John Fisher.

Upstairs where St. Brigitta and Blessed Katharine lived are two more chapels frescoed in a Viollet le Duc manner, one where St. Brigitta died and one where Blessed Katharine lived.

If one looks at the guest book he sees that the visitors come from all over the world, mostly Sweden, and then the other Scandinavian nations, and finally other countries such as America.

The sisters welcome visitors. For those wishing to make reservations, write to:

Casa Santa Brigitta, Piazza Farnese #36 Rome 0018, Italy

Viggo Bech Rambusch

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**Memorial to Nils Bielke, Catholic Convert in the chapel of the convent**

"PLEASE REMEMBER OUR WORK IN YOUR WILL"
### Statics for Scandinavia as of January 1994

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"Pray for Scandinavia"
St. Ansgar’s League 1994

This year has followed its usual course. In December we held our celebration of St. Lucia at St. Thomas More Church. We appreciate the participation of our members in this Mass and party. Many who cannot attend send in their chance books. We are not very good at raising money and this is one of the few ways that we keep afloat financially. Thank you.

In February, we celebrated mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral. This year the Cathedral parish graciously sponsored a luncheon which was very much appreciated. As poor St. Ansgar has the misfortune of having the same day as Blaise, he is often neglected. We need to remember his importance as a missionary and also as the patron saint of Scandinavia and of Hamburg and Bremen in Germany. It would seem possible to me to limit the celebration of Blaise to blessing of throats and to say the mass that day in honor of Ansgar. Much of the Life of Blaise is highlyembroidered while that of Ansgar is fairly accurate.

In June we travel to Darien and the Birgitta Sisters. This is such a lovely occasion that we always wish more of our New England friends would join us. We always choose a Saturday when the tide is high and the last one in is a sissy. The Sisters always provide a lovely coffee hour and we are happy to see their home looking so nice. It is one of the best places I know for a restful vacation. I often meet people there from the midwest or Europe who have somehow learned of the sisters. Their telephone number is (203) 655-1068.

In September we came to the climax of a long period of work: the effort to get a papal citation for John Dwight and Viggo Rambusch. This had been suggested long ago by Bishop Ansgar Nelson and since then the Bishops of Scandinavia together with us had been working to move the proper authorities. The result was grander and later than we had hoped. Both men, as noted elsewhere in the Bulletin, were made members of the Equestrian Order of St. Gregory. John’s award was received by his brother and sister, Kirby Dwight and Barbara Schriever.

A number of visitors came to see us this year. From Sweden we should note Fr. Tobias Unnestaal who is the assistant in Gothenburg, Christ the King. He brought greetings from priests we knew in that area. We also met Fr. Bachbauer from Altomünster in Germany. Among his other duties, he is Chaplain to the Bridgetine Convent and head of the Ansgar League in his diocese. I was rather amused (in Sweden) to find that the German Ansgarians had discovered their American cousins. In Germany, there are organizations in many of the dioceses to support voluntarily the church in Scandinavia. The Ansgar societies produce a very good Bulletin, which, among other things, tells where mass is being said in the northern countries. In addition to voluntary support (about $50,000 a year) by the Ansgar organizations, the Bonifatius organization also provides support for all of the “diaspora” churches. Much of their funds comes from regular collections for missions in the German churches. “Diaspora” means churches with some connec-


“PLEASE TELL OTHERS ABOUT THIS WORK”
League’s Honorary Patron’s Funeral Mass, March 25, 1994, Feast of the Annunciation

The beautiful and modern Egan Chapel of St. Ignatius of Loyola at the Jesuit Fairfield University was overflowing with families and friends as the Funeral Mass of our beloved Bishop Alfred J. Jolson, S.J. was celebrated. And celebrated it was as befitting one of the first of modern day bishops to be appointed to Iceland since the Reformation, and an American who had Icelandic blood through his paternal line. A native of Bridgeport, Connecticut, it seemed only fitting that the Mass be celebrated in that area, for from then on, his body would rest not in his native land, but forever in what had become his second home, his beloved Iceland. The League had made him its Honorary Patron but some three years earlier upon the death of Archbishop John F. Whealon of Hartford, and it was indeed a shock to see our new patron taken away so quickly. Bishop Jolson had once referred to his predecessor as possessing “a true Viking Scandinavian patient endurance” during his illness. These words may well be applied to Bishop Jolson himself who during his administration of the difficult Diocese of Reykjavik had possessed the same qualities as he ministered and met the difficulties that such a mission post presented. His tenure in his office lasted only six years, but they were full and very productive ones for the Church there, and the eulogies made that day detailed this to some extent, but no eulogy could ever be adequate to capture the joys and sorrows, the frustrations and the victories, the sweetness and the bitterness, the many accomplishments and the sometimes failures that went with such a post. Eulogies can only give a portion of the man, and each one of the congregants who were fortunate to have met him however briefly, or who had corresponded with him, or who had heard him speak so movingly and eloquently would have to try somehow round out the dimensions of the man for themselves.

Almost 100 of his fellow priests, many of them from his own Jesuit Order, concelebrated the Mass of the Resurrection along with Cardinal Ignatius Kung Pin Mei formerly of Shanghai, and the chief President, Cardinal John O’Connor of the New York Archdiocese. Family and friends filled the pews and they came from all parts of Connecticut as well as from other nearby states to pay tribute to their deceased brother in Christ.

Cardinal O’Connor spoke briefly, mentioning the fact that the Bishop could have been ordained as Bishop by Pope John Paul himself as is the usual custom, but that he had chosen the Cardinal to ordain him to the office in a gesture which indicated how much he had thought of O’Connor and how much he valued their friendship. The Cardinal recalled that eventful day of Ordination, February 15, 1958 very well, and delighted in his reminiscing, and recalled the difficulties the Bishop faced to minister to his small and scattered flock of Catholics. The chief homilist, however, was the Rev. Donald D. Lynch, a Brother Jesuit and associated with the University, and another moving tribute was also paid by the Rev. William A. Barry the New England Provincial of the Jesuit Order. Both priests spoke of their personal recollections of the Bishop, and both considered him as exemplary priest, renowned scholar, and staunch friend. Father Lynch stated that he saw his friend “as one who knew Christ in strangers”, and that more importantly Bishop Jolson was “one who lived his life so others could see Christ in him”. Father Barry stated that the Bishop had “left his mark wherever he went” and that he expected “he will be enjoying eternal life with even more gusto than he enjoyed this life”.

As is the custom, small memorial cards were passed out at the Mass, and it is well to conclude here, I believe, with the Prayer found on it, for it depicts so faithfully Bishop Jolson’s attitude in life. It recalls his faith, his concern for others, and above all his humility. It reads as follows:

In aspiring to the better life for myself and my loved ones, dear Lord God of worthy aspiration and achievement, I crave your special blessing as I set forth my ideas and ideals and how I hope to translate them from thoughts into action, fill me with purpose and confidence and courage, for I recognize the wisdom of one who remarked “those who try to do something and fail are infinitely better than those who try to do nothing and succeed”. - N.F.

Bells Ring for Dead Bishop - By Dee Maggioni

A clipping from the April 6th issue of Landakot's newspaper, Morgunbladid Midvikudagur, read as follows: "The church bells at the church of Landakot began to ring for some unexplainable reason on Monday last week, the day that the bishop of the Catholic Church in Iceland Alfred Jolson, was buried. The bells are not known to have done this in the past. Some said that the ringing of the bells is 'jartart,' or a miracle, similar to when Bishop Jon Arason (the last Catholic Bishop in Iceland before Lutheranism became the state religion) was buried in the year 1650. At that time, it is said, the church bells suddenly began to ring by some supernatural cases.”

Fairfield County Catholic Sept., 1994

"WE NEED MORE MEMBERS"
Long Time Bulletin Editor Dies

The death of John Dwight on Feb. 6, 1944 at the age of 83 did not come as a surprise. He had been an invalid for some time and we knew that sooner or later one of the strokes he suffered would be the final one. Nevertheless, his death left us with a sense of having lost a cheerful friend, a man of prayer and a stalwart worker for St. Ansgar’s League.

From childhood, John had been interested in architecture and this led to an interest in churches and eventually to the Catholic Church. He became a Catholic as a teenager and the astonishment of his family which had a long New England Presbyterian and Congregational background. John Dwight was his first American ancestor; he emigrated from Denham, England to Denham, Massachusetts in 1634. Our Mr. Dwight was born in New York City, the son of Dr. Kirby Dwight and his wife Genevieve Keachum. He graduated from Holy Cross College in Worcester and did graduate work at Harvard.

He became interested in Eastern rites and worked at translating them into English. The little St. Michael’s Byzantine-Russian Chapel became his spiritual home and he was very active in it, especially as a choir member. It was through a member of that chapel that he learned of St. Ansgar’s League and became active in it, filling a number of posts through the years. It is, however, as Editor of the Bulletin that he became known in wider circles. He was a voracious reader of Scandinavian publications and had a talent for finding interesting and informative material to print. He worked tirelessly at the composition and set up of the publication. The difficulties encountered with printers make a chapter of their own. In an effort to make the Bulletin reflect the current northern scene, he almost annually travelled to Scandinavia. Sometimes he would wait for days before he could visit someone but he doggedly continued his pursuit of the latest news of the church. Some items which we spared you he would divulge over a certain clear, cold beverage.

For 38 years he remained the Editor. The last few editions represented a triumph of the will. The last several trips to Scandinavia were a small martyrdom. Somehow the Bulletin would appear and it was as interesting as ever.

In 1986 Mr. Dwight received the Holy Cross of Jerusalem for his contributions to Eastern Catholic Churches. This year, post-humously, he became a knight of the Equestrian Order of St. Gregory for his work in the League. May the angels lead him into paradise.

Induction Into Order of St. Gregory

The members of St. Ansgar’s Scandinavian Catholic League were honored Tuesday, September 27th, when Viggo F.E. Rambusch and John Dwight were inducted into the Order of St. Gregory as Mounted Knights by order of Pope John Paul II. Fr. John Halborg presented the Pope’s official communication at the League’s offices at the Rambusch Decorating Company, 40 West 13th Street, New York.

The League supports Catholicism in Scandinavia through an active Mass stipend program and the annual publication of the St. Ansgar’s Bulletin, which describes the Church past and present in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

The St. Ansgar’s League was founded in 1910 at the request of Cardinal Farley by Mr. Rambusch’s father as a network for other Scandinavian converts and those interested in the Scandinavian Church. His son carried on his father’s work as president from 1938 to 1991. The current president is Astrid O’Brien, Ph.D., faculty member, Fordham University at Lincoln Center.

After World War I, the Bulletin became the primary source of information about Catholicism in Scandinavia. Convert and noble prize winner Sigrid Undset contributed to the Bulletin during the Nazi occupation of Norway. After World War II, Viggo F.E. Rambusch coordinated with Catholic Relief Services for supplies to Scandinavia, and helped the Scandinavian Bishops come to America for appeal tours. Fr. John LaFarge, S.J., served as Spiritual Director during this era.

John Dwight, a convert and scholar, served as the Bulletin’s Editor for the past 40 years. Not a Scandinavian, he studied the languages of the North. Every summer he traveled there to interview local clergy and missionaries. The Bulletin incorporated his observations, as well as key stories from the Scandinavian Catholic press and special articles submitted by others.

John Dwight died this past winter. Since that time Father John Halborg of St. Thomas More, Manhattan has served as Editor of the Bulletin. Members of the Dwight family were on hand for the ceremony. The honor was received posthumously by John’s brother Kirby.

Eric Rambusch

"SCANDINAVIA PLEADS FOR MASS STIPENDS"
Our New Honorary Patron

We are pleased to announce that Bishop Robert Carlson has agreed to our request to become our new Honorary Patron. Bishop Carlson was Ordained a Priest in 1970. He was Ordained as a Bishop in 1984 and served as an Auxiliary in the St. Paul/Minneapolis Diocese. In 1994, he was named Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Bishop Carlson has been a longtime member of the League and actively supported our organization. He is noted for his work with young people. He has a Licentiate in Canon Law from Catholic University in America. We look forward to meeting him and wish him many years of blessings.

Mrs. Brendan Smith, New York City, NY
Sister Elizabeth Soderquist, Naperville, IL
Elizabeth Sullivan, Bronx, NY
Gerardo Tango, Covington, LA
Rev. John Williams, Clinton, NC
Rev. Gary Young, Chicago, IL
Jeff Wilson, Batesville, IN

New Members

Eileen Anderson, Brooklyn, NY
Ellen I. Andrews, Bronxville, NY
Rev. Conrad Antonsen, S.J., Berkeley, CA
Sister Barbara Arnesen, C.N.D., Westmount, Canada
Rev. Michael Bradley, Chicago IL
Charles & Eileen Brady, Buffalo, NY
Rev. Patrick Breen, Reykjavik, Iceland
Elsie Christensen, Danevang, TX
Dr. Thomas Day, Newport, RI
Henry Edward Drewett, Jr., Union City, NJ
Egon Franzen, Boreholm, Sweden
Most Rev. John R. Gorman, Chicago, IL
Gerald T. Griffin, Falmouth, ME
Brother Regis Hovald, O.P., Chicago, IL
Immaculate Conception Center, Douglaston, NY
Catherine M. Kierny, Ayrshire, England
Barbro Linquist, Harnosand, Sweden
Karen Dawn Luvaas, Memphis, TN
Rev. Joseph Martensen, West Salem, WI
David Martland, Esq., Brookline, MA
Montfort Missionaries, Bayshore, NY
James R. Regan, Albany, NY
Felicia Reilly, Chicago, IL
Rev. James W. Ryan, Brooklyn, NY
Paul Sepe, Thornton, NH
Alan Smedsrud, Lewisville, TX

R.I.P.

Ms. Karen S. Barnett, Salt Lake City, UT
Ms. Mary Bergin, New York City, NY
Ms. Margaret M. Carroll, Bronx, NY
Sister Catherine Marie, Precious Blood Sister, O’Fallon, MO
Mr. John A. Church, White Plains, NY
Mrs. W. Bingham Cox, New York City, NY
Mrs. Marion Demers, Worcester, MA
Mr. John T. Dwight, New York City, NY
Msgr. Thomas S. Hendrickson, Hankinson, ND
Rev. Claude Klarowski, Chicago, IL
Mrs. Pauline Lawless, Orono, ME
John V. Lindner, Jamestown, NY
Mrs. Miriam Erickson Magna, Staten Island, NY
Ms. Patricia Owens, Albany, NY
Rev. Aloisius Plaisance, O.S.B., Cullman, AL
Mrs. Robert Rambusch, New York City, NY

"PLEASE REMEMBER OUR WORK IN YOUR WILL"
PRAYER FOR SCANDINAVIA

O Jesus, our God and Savior, by the merits of Your Most Precious Blood, shed for all men, we ask You to look with special love upon the people of Scandinavia. Grant peace and holiness to Your Church in these countries. Instill zeal, courage and confidence in the hearts of their bishops, priests, religious and faithful.

Promote the work of Unity among all Christian people, giving them courage and humility to seek the means of advancing this Cause for which you prayed and gave Your life. Grant to all who profess belief in You, harmony and love, as well as the grace to grow in holiness and to attain eternal salvation.

We ask these blessings through Your Virgin Mother, St. Ansgar and all the saints of these lands, for the honor and glory of Your Name, and for the welfare of Your Church. Amen.

Fr. Titus Cranny, S.A., National Director of Unity Apostolate, Graymoor. (with permission of superiors)

Scandinavian Feast Days

Mass is said by our Chaplain, for the intention of the League on the Feasts of our patrons as follows: St. Canute (Denmark) and St. Henry (Finland), January 19th, St. Ansgar (Scandinavia), February 3rd, St. Olav (Norway), July 29th, St. Birgitta or Bridget, October 8th, and St. Erik (Sweden), October 8th.

Honorary Patron

MOST REV. ROBERT CARLSON, BISHOP COADJUTOR OF SIOUX FALLS

Officers of the Parent Unit

Rev. Thomas A. Nielsen, Chaplain
Rev. John E. Halberg, Director of Programs
and Editor of the Bulletin
Mr. Viggo F.E. Rambusch, Honorary President
Mrs. Astrid O'Brien, President
Mrs. Nicholas Faico, Vice President - Membership
Mrs. Mary Westerberg, Recording Secretary

Mr. John T. Dwight, Honorary Editor of the Bulletin
Miss Dorothy Bellman, Treasurer
Mr. Brian Andersson, Corresponding Secretary
Mrs. Anne Pascarelli Director of Publicity
Mrs. Francis Wilks, Assistant Secretary
Mr. Erik H. Rambusch, Special Projects, Vice President
Miss Pamela Downing, Assistant to the Editor

The officers of the League are unpaid volunteers; no salaries are paid to anyone.

For facts about the Church in Scandinavia and general information, please address Corresponding Secretary, at Headquarters.

This BULLETIN is published annually at year’s end for our Members, and is supported by their dues. If not yet a Member and you wish to receive the BULLETIN regularly, please fill out the attached blank, together with your check or money order. (All are welcome.) Please notify us of any change of address.

I would like to enrolled in St. Ansgar’s Scandinavian Catholic League as:

☐ Regular Member $10.00         ☐ Patron Member $50.00
☐ Sustaining Member $20.00      ☐ Life Member $200.00 once for all

Your donations are tax-deductible

Name __________________________

Address _______________________

(Make checks out to “St. Ansgar’s Leauge” and send to the Treasurer, 40 W. 13th St., New York, NY 10011)

"PRAY FOR SCANDINAVIA"