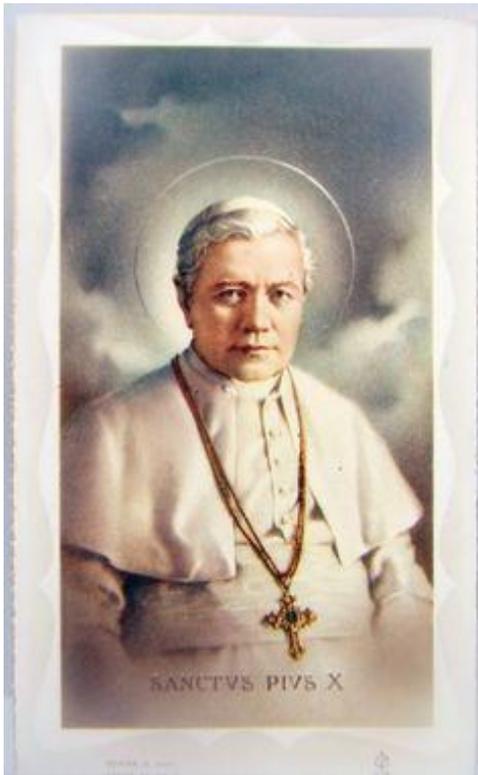


Feast of Pope St. Pius X

Former Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

Reflection by
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Giuseppe (Joseph) Melchiorre Sarto was born on June 2, 1835, in Riese, Italy. He was the second of ten children born to Giovanni and Margarita Sarto. His father was the village postman, but that large family lived in poverty.

At a very young age, Joseph studied Latin at a school in Castelfranco, entered the seminary at 15 and was ordained a priest on September 18, 1858 — 23 years old. Twenty-six years later, he was ordained Bishop of Mantua; and in 1893, at age 58, he was made a Cardinal and the Patriarch (or Archbishop) of Venice. He was elected Pope on August 4, 1903 and took the name Pius X.

With his election as Pope, he was also formally the Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. The motto he took as Pope was “*Instaurare Omnia in Christo*” or “*To restore all things in Christ*”. Thus his pontificate was noted for its reform of theological studies, liturgy, and canon law.

He did away with much of the pomp and circumstance of his predecessor popes and tried to remain true to his humble origins. For example, when chided by Rome’s social leaders for refusing to make his peasant sisters **papal countesses**, he responded “I have made them sisters of the Pope; what more can I do for them?” He loved children and insisted that they gather around him during papal audiences and he even taught weekly catechism lessons in the Vatican to children.

Among his reforms were:

- the encouragement of daily Communion;
- the lowering of the age for First Communion from 12 to 7 years old;
- the establishment of **The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine** (CCD);
- the publishing of a new Catechism;
- the beginning of a universal set of laws (Canon Law) which would be published posthumously in 1917 (and remained the church’s legal system until a new revision in 1983);
- and a decree demanding the complete separation of church and state (thus ending outside influence on the Church’s governance).

In 1908, Pius X lifted the United States of America out of its missionary status, in recognition of its tremendous growth. He was very popular among American Catholics, due to his poor background, which made him appear as an ordinary person. In 1914 he approved the patronage of the Immaculate Conception for the United States and allowed the construction of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

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He died on August 20, 1914 from complications of a heart attack a year earlier; he was also greatly depressed with the recent outbreak of World War I. He was canonized on May 29, 1954 by Pope Pius XII. He is the patron saint of First Communicants and pilgrims as well as the following dioceses in the United States: Atlanta, Georgia; Des Moines, Iowa; Great Falls-Billings, Montana; and Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

What an amazing life — from the simple life of a poor postman's son to Pope and to sainthood! As members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, we need to model our lives after this great Catholic saint. Here are a few challenges:

- like Pope Pius X and like our present Pope Francis, we must always be mindful of and generous to the poor, the marginalized, the forgotten, and the outcasts of our society;
- we must show loving care and attention to children — especially to those who live in poverty, are homeless, refugees, abandoned, abused, or separated from family;
- we need to increase our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and a frequent reception of the Eucharist — as difficult as it may be during this time of the Coronavirus Pandemic;
- we should avail ourselves to the study of our Catholic faith — by subscribing to Catholic newspapers and magazines, reading Catholic literature, and attending Adult Education Classes;
- we should respect our Church authorities and pray for them often: our Holy Father, Pope Francis, our (arch)bishops, pastors, and priests as well as religious brothers and sisters;
- we must pray for our civil leaders on all levels — federal, state, and local, and participate in our democratic process of this upcoming election.

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