

Vatican Missionary Exposition

VARIED EXHIBITS PRESENT VIVID RECORD OF CATHOLIC ACHIEVEMENT.

By the time this appears in print (writes a Rome correspondent to the *Boston Pilot*, under date January 8) the opening of the Vatican Missionary Exposition will be history, and as I sit here surrounded by buildings seething with eleventh-hour activity, I try to anticipate what the great exhibition will mean for Catholicism.

The Holy Father has just driven by a few yards from the China pavilion in which I write and has alighted and entered a nearby dell cloistered with hedges. About two years ago (March 20, 1923), the preliminary meeting for the exposition was called at his word, and a month later, on April 24, he gave the order to begin. Millions of lire have been expended on the project and a large group of scholars and administrators have given the best portion of the intervening two years to the innumerable details. His Holiness must feel gratified to see the realisation of this effort to intensify the mission interest of Christendom.

On December 21, his Holiness, accompanied by his Cardinals and the diplomatic corps, entered the Exposition from the Vatican. A special door was prepared for him entering on a vestibule containing castings of all the continents and leading to the twenty-two exhibit halls beyond. Surmounting the entrance is a huge cross with an ivory Corpus, a gift to his Holiness Pope Leo XIII.

"The place of honor must be reserved for the Head of all missions," remarked his Grace Archbishop Marchetti, who, as Secretary of the Congregation of Propaganda, and president of the Exposition, has been on the grounds for months from morning until evening directing the preparations.

Roads Trodden by Our Lord.

The logical starting point for a tour of the Exposition is the Hall of the Holy Land. If you have the privilege of visiting Rome this year make the first object of your attention the large raised model of Palestine six metres by three metres in size, which holds the centre of this hall. Here you may trace the roads the Saviour trod.

From Palestine one passes to the Hall of Mission History. Students of missions have overseen its preparation although they have made no pretence at completeness. The Christian advance is divided into four periods: from the Apostles to St. Benedict; from St. Benedict to St. Francis of Assisi; from St. Francis of Assisi to the discovery of America; and the great period of modern times.

Paintings of great apostles are on the walls, charts give the story of the centuries, while glass cases contain valuable records. The full-size model of the remarkable Nestorian tablet of Si-Ngan-Fu, North China, which was presented to the Vatican by its discoverer, is one of this hall's objects of outstanding interest.

If you would linger for a while among the mountain peaks of the Church's glory, pass into the Hall of Mission Martyrs. No one has counted Catholic martyrs, for no records

except the Book of Life can give them all. Here is a hall in commemoration.

Beautiful paintings, some from the Lat-eran Galleries, 25 supplied by the Franciscans, and others from various countries of Europe, tell of torture, death, and glory. A sculpture in the centre of the hall shows Pope Gregory sending forth the apostles of England and Germany. This work has just been completed by an artist brought here by the Benedictines. Glass cases about the walls hold relics, instruments of torture, and records of martyrdoms.

Contribution to Knowledge.

A few steps will bring you to an entirely different phase of mission activities: The Hall of Ethnology and Linguistics. This hall reveals what missionaries have contributed to the world's deposit of knowledge. The hand of scholars is evident here. Large display cases contain carefully arranged specimens and the walls are covered with charts and diagrams.

Opposite the Vatican hall of entrance is the Mission Library. This will be in every sense a library and doubtless holds a special measure of the affection of the Sovereign Pontiff. Tiers of steel shelves enough to accommodate over 30,000 volumes, are in place, and glass-top steel shelves for valuable mission book exhibits promise to make this the finest library of its kind in the world. Thousands of volumes have already been gathered from every continent.

Beyond this hall are the mission field exhibits. The Hall of North America is certainly a credit to the societies that planned it. Beautiful castings of great Indian chiefs and bas-reliefs of Indian life are some of the decorative features. A copy of the statue of Father Marquette which stands in the United States Capitol makes a fitting centre-piece.

The Hall of South America holds a commanding figure of Don Bosco. The Halls of the Near East and India are crowded to the very roofs with models, specimens, and splendid photographic collections, some of great value and all of interest to the lover of missions and to the student of peoples.

An Exposition catalogue has been prepared. A monthly review will be published during the Exposition under the direction of scholarly editors and an official photographer will make a camera record of the Exposition's treasures.

A Notable Painting.

The mission-field exhibits finish the first group of specially constructed buildings and lead into the Cortile della Pigna, a court of the Vatican Palace which the coming spring will make a landscape delight and in which are a group of native huts from far scattered parts of Asia. Due to the unforeseen extent of exhibits the Vatican Museo di Chiaramonte has been converted into the Hall of Mission Institutes, and the Egyptian Museum holds for the year the Hall of Europe, the Hall of Civilisation and Pro-

gress, and the Hall of Mission Aid Societies.

We pass from the "Court of the Pine Cone" to a group of six pavilions devoted to the missions of Africa, Eastern Asia, and the South Seas. All of these halls were not ready on the opening day, due to transportation difficulties, but soon they were to be groaning under trainloads of cases built with incalculable effort from the mission fields. The exhibit of the Jesuits in the China section alone filled forty great boxes. The Parish Foreign Mission Society has almost 400 cases of specimens from forty fields stretching from the torrid to the frigid zones.

Returning to the entrance we find the Hall of Medical Missions. Here again is the thorough hand of the scientist with a story of acute suffering among unchristianised millions and of loving devotion on the part of missionaries and medical workers.

Above the exit from the Hall of the Holy Land is a painting entitled "E Passato Gesù," "Jesus has Passed." The great stairway of an Eastern street occupies half the canvass. At one side of the stairway is a group of people kneeling. Jesus has passed and left the impression of His life on them. This is the lesson of the Exposition.

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