

THE REBUILDING OF ST. PETERS BASILICA AND THE VATICAN PALACE.

INNOCENT XI.

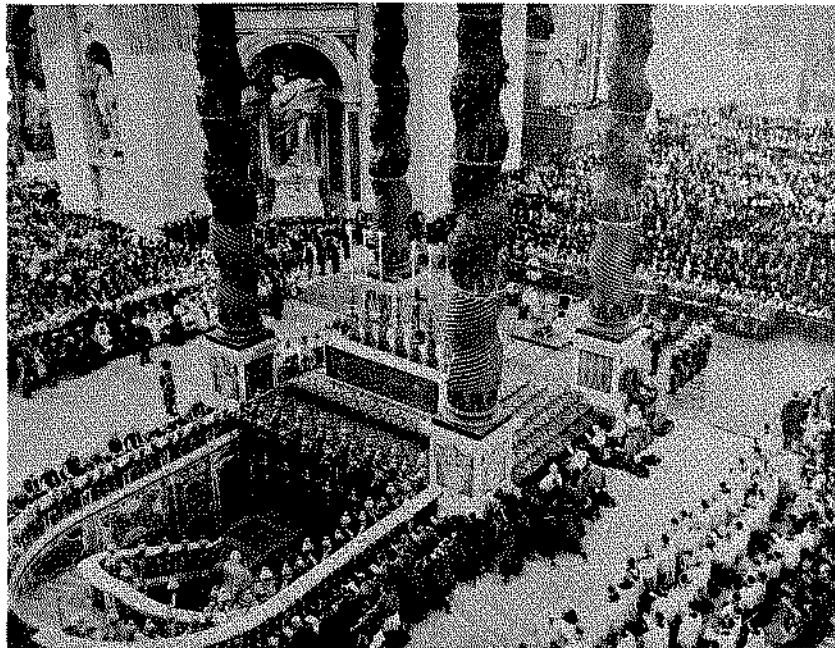
Under Innocent XI, Carlo Fontana suggested the extension of the Bernini Colonnade as far as the Piazza Scossa Cavalli, and that it be rounded off with a triumphal arch and clock tower. Because of straightened circumstances in 1679, Innocent XI refused his suggestion, but instructed Fontana and Giovan Battista Centini to provide a second fountain for St. Peters with water from Lake Bracciano. (Pastor XXXII, pp.35-37)

CLEMENT XI.

Clement XI gave instructions for the execution of the statue of Charlemagne, and ordered completion of the statues for the colonnade according with Bernini's plan. but nothing was accomplished because of the intervening death of this pope. (XXXIII Pastor, pp.517-524)

BENEDICT XIV.

Benedict XIV was bothered by recurring rumors that the cracks which had appeared long ago in the dome of St. Peters would lead to its collapse. In 1740 a commission of three cardinals was set up to investigate this circumstance. They concluded that it was nothing more than an unfounded rumor. Luigi Vanvitelli, architect of the Fabbrica of St. Peters came to the same conclusion. In 1742 further examination was made by architects Domenico Gregorini, Ferdinando Fuga, Pietro Ostini, Niccola Salvi and Vanvitelli, all of whom reported no danger. The cracks meant that the structure had settled. Mathematicians Roggero Boscovich, S.J., Thomas le Seur and Francois Jacquier were consulted in 1743, together with Giovanni Polenti, Professor of mathematics at Padua. Polenti decided that the cracks were due to lateral pressure of the upper components and recommended the affixing of more iron bands to strengthen it, as had been done under Sixtus V. This was done under the supervision of Vanvitelli, who also decorated the three tribunes of St. Peters with gilded stucco. Under Benedict XIV St. Peters acquired some of its best statues of the saints. (Pastor XXXV, pp.163-167)



1944 Photo of Pope Pius XII at prayer before the Papal Altar. Pillar of St. Veronica, showing statue by Mocchi. Bernini's Canopy. Depressed area of the Confessio.

The Museum of Christian Antiquities was founded under Benedict XIV. This had been suggested to Clement XI by Marcantonio Boldetti and Francesco Bianchi. Benedict XIV acquired two private collections as a nucleus, and after indecision as to whether the museum should be at the Vatican or the Capitoline, it was begun in 1755 at the Vatican so that it would be connected with the Vatican Library (Pastor XXXV, pp 219-222) Clement XIV was grieved by the removal of antique statuary from Italy and the Pontifical State, despite previous decrees by various popes, and he began to purchase all available antique statuary. In 1771 he commissioned Michaelangelo Simonetti to convert into a statue gallery the former summer house of Innocent VIII near the Belvedere and to join it to the Belvedere courtyard. This was completed in 1773 and housed the antiquities collected from the time of Julius II to Clement XIV. From then on newly discovered statues were brought and placed in the Clementine Museum. (Pastor XXXVIII pp 512-515)

PIUS VI.



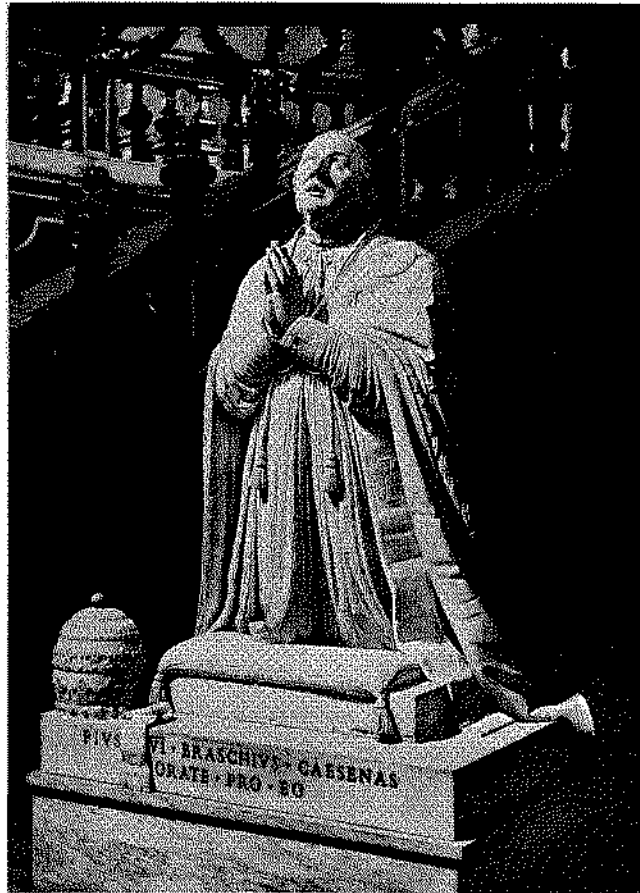
One of the first works of Pius VI was the construction of a much needed sacristy of spacious size which had been contemplated by Alexander VII, Clement XI and Clement XII. Pius VI examined the plans of his predecessors and finally approved the plan of Carlo Marchione, a Roman, who had built the Villa Albani.

July 1776 saw the purchase of the Church of St. Stephen of Hungary from the German College together with the neighboring houses which must be removed to make way for the new sacristy. On September 22, 1776, Pius VI laid the foundation stone of the new sacristy. In the summer of 1777 the old sacristy was demolished and in 1779 the Porta Fabbrica was taken down and re-erected as the Porta San Pietro on another site. Numerous other buildings were removed to give space for the new sacristy.

As the work progressed it was seen that it would cost much more than the original estimate, and the original plan had to be curtailed. In June 1784 the new sacristy was placed in operation at a cost 15 times higher than the original estimate, despite the curtailments. Many condemned it as unartistic; but it had only one flaw - it was located next to the work of Bramante and Michaelangelo.

Two passages, one to the choir chapel and one to the left aisle, join the sacristy to St. Peters Basilica. From the street a broad double flight of steps leads to the main entry. In the center of the building is the Sagrestia Comune, an octagonal, domed room. To the east lies the Canons Sacristy which leads to the chapter room, while to the west is the beneficiaries sacristy, which leads to the Guardarobia, which is used as the treasury. Connected to the building are lodgings for the canons. On the upper floor are the archives of St. Peters.

New finds of ancient statuary came to the Vatican and the Clementine Museum was enlarged and the Galleria delle Statue was made to include the Belvedere as far as the Vatican Library. A new title, the Pio-Clementine, was given to the Museum.



Statue of Pope Pius VI by Canova.
In the Confessio of St. Peters.

Pius VI gave a 14 ton bell to St. Peters as well as the two clocks on the facade attic of St. Peters. In the interior of St. Peters he provided 25 mosaic frontals for the various altars, installed new windows in the dome and regilded the ceiling of the nave. The mosaic factory was installed in new quarters.

Antonio Canova was charged with a monument to Clement XIII for St. Peters and it was unveiled in Holy Week, 1792. (Pastor XXXIX, pp 62092). Pius VI was buried in the Grotte Vaticane, and twenty years later, in 1822, Canova's masterpiece of Pius VI at prayer was erected in the space before the Confessio of St. Peters. (Pastor XL,p.393)

Thus the work begun by Pope Nicholas V (1447-1455) for all practical purposes was completed. The hands of many popes and the plans of many architects had raised a fitting monument over the tomb of St. Peter, to replace the Constantine Basilica, despite the delays and vicissitudes of many years.

(This brings to an end the series of articles begun in Vatican Notes, Volume XI, No. 2, January-February, 1963, by Father Phinney. This series was previously published in Linns Weekly Satmp News several years previous in a series of eight articles and was reproduced with the written consent of Linns.)