



SERVANT OF GOD

Newsletter of the Hecker Guild

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Prayer for Fr. Hecker's Cause

Heavenly Father, you called Isaac Hecker to preach the Gospel to the people of North America and to know the peace and the power of your indwelling Spirit. Like St. Paul the Apostle, he spoke your Word with a zeal for souls and a burning love for all who came to him in need. Hear our prayer through the intercession of Father Hecker, grant (state the request). We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit. One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Hecker Guild Monthly Masses

The New York Chapter of the Fr. Isaac T. Hecker Guild will sponsor a special Mass at St. Paul the Apostle Church for the intention of the cause of Fr. Hecker every month (except April). The Mass will usually be followed by a meeting in the Parish Center focused on some aspect of Fr. Hecker's life or his Cause. All are invited. Hecker Guild Masses will be celebrated on March 8, May 17 and June 14 at 10 a.m.



The Nuper Nonnulli document promulgated by Blessed Pope Pius IX on March 6, 1858, released Father Francis Baker (above, from left), Father George Deshon, Father Isaac Hecker, and Father Clarence Walworth from the Redemptorist order. Hecker, Hewit, Deshon, and Baker went on to form the first religious community of men in the United States, the Paulist Fathers.

Nuper Nonnulli

As a new Catholic in 1844, Isaac Hecker's immediate practical task was to find his vocation in the Church. Even before his baptism, he had committed himself to a celibate life. In 1845, he met two other new Catholics who were planning to enter the Redemptorist novitiate in Europe, and he decided to join them.

In a letter to Orestes Brownson, Hecker had expressed "the need of being under stronger Catholic influences than are so far as my experience goes, in this country." In providing an immersion experience in European Catholicism, Hecker's Redemptorist formation helped him to process his personal religious experience within a thoroughly Catholic

conceptual and institutional structure. Ordained in 1849, Father Hecker returned to the U.S. in 1851 as part of a new English-speaking, Redemptorist mission band.

Parish missions sought to elevate the spiritual life of the faithful and reconcile back to the sacraments those who had lapsed or become alienated. By challenging Catholics to a higher standard of moral

behavior – for example, by reducing alcohol abuse – missions contributed to what Hecker, in another letter to Brownson, called "a higher tone of Catholic life in our country," one consequence of which would be to make the Church more attractive to non-Catholics. While working on

the missions, Hecker addressed his non-Catholic countrymen directly in his first book, *Questions of the Soul* (1855), the success of which established him as one of the leading spokesmen for Roman Catholicism in the U.S.

In 1857, Hecker and four Redemptorists – Clarence Walworth, Augustine Hewit, George De-

shon, and Francis Baker – all also American-born, former Protestants, decided to appeal directly to the Redemptorist authorities in Rome for an English-speaking American house primarily focused on missionary outreach. Armed with supportive letters from leading U.S. Bishops, Hecker traveled to Rome. When the Redemptorist

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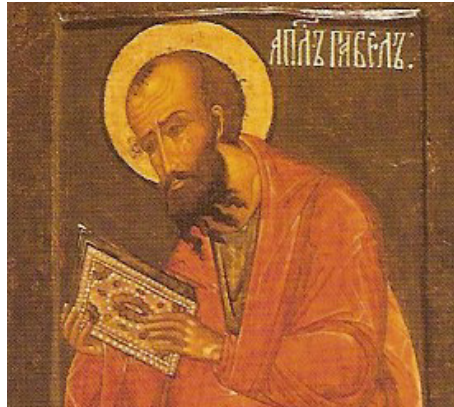
Hecker workshop at NY spirituality convocation

Fr. Ronald Franco, C.S.P., Vice Postulator for the Cause of Fr. Isaac Hecker, will present a workshop -Isaac T. Hecker: 19th-Century New York Pastor, 21st-Century American Saint? - at the Archdiocese of New York's annual Spirituality Convocation, on March 15, 2008. For further information, contact Center for Spiritual Development, 950 Mamaroneck Avenue, White Plains, NY 10605 (914-946-5729).

The Communion of Saints and canonization

The French novelist Leon Bloy is supposed to have said that the only sadness is not to be a saint. Literally, of course, the word “saint” simply means “holy.” This is the will of God, St. Paul wrote, your holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3). More recently, Vatican II recalled how all in the Church are called to holiness, the fullness of Christian life, and the perfection of love (Lumen Gentium, 39-40). In the Apostles Creed, we profess our faith in “the Communion of Saints.” This Communion of Saints unites us who are still on earth with those holy ones whose salvation and ultimate sanctity are already assured.

Of this multitude from every race, nation, people, and tongue (Revelation 7:9), a certain number have been officially canonized by the Church as “Saints.” The process of Canonization is the Church’s solemn and definitive declaration that a particular person is now in the glory of heaven, intercedes for us before the Lord, and is therefore to be venerated publicly by the Church. Canonized saints are seen as visible examples of the effects of God’s gifts of grace and as models of sanctity, of whose friendship and intercession we



An icon of St. Paul the Apostle

are beneficiaries. Thus the Church prays (Preface of Holy Men and Women I):

You are glorified in your saints, for their glory is the crowning of your gifts.

In their lives on earth you give us an example.

In our communion with them, you give us their friendship.

In their prayer for the Church you give us strength and protection.

This great company of witnesses spurs us on to victory, to share their prize of everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Next Month: The Process of Canonization – Diocesan Phase

Vatican document cleared way for Paulists

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General Council met, however, it decided that Hecker’s unauthorized trip constituted grounds for dismissal.

Enthusiastic about his goal of evangelization, Hecker remained in Rome and appealed his case to the Congregation of Propaganda (the curial body in charge of the Church in mission territories) which had jurisdiction over the U.S. Church. Awaiting the outcome, Hecker actively promoted his case in every available way – including writing articles in the important Jesuit journal *Civiltà Cattolica*, optimistically assessing the Catholic Church’s prospects in the U.S. In a letter to his brother George, written shortly after his expulsion, he wrote: “This morning I said Mass in St. Peter’s. Our affairs are in the hands of God. I hope no one will feel discouraged, nor fear for me. All that is needed

to bring the interests of God to a successful issue is grace, grace, grace, and this is obtained by prayer, and if the American Fathers will only pray, and get others to pray, and not let anyone have the slightest reason to bring a word against them in our present crisis, God will be with us, and Our Lady will take good care of us.”

Finally, on March 6, 1858, the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars issued the Decree *Nuper Nonnulli*. It dispensed Walworth, Hewit, Deshon, and Baker from their vows, joined Hecker to their petition in respect to the dispensation (thereby implicitly setting aside the original dismissal), and directed them to work “under the direction and jurisdiction of the local bishops.” Hecker returned to New York and there founded the Paulist Fathers on July 7, 1858.

What is the Hecker Guild?

The Father Isaac T. Hecker Guild, an association of members and volunteers committed to support a coordinated effort to promote the cause for canonization of Servant of God Father Isaac T. Hecker, founder of the Paulist Fathers.

The mission of the guild is: to foster daily prayer for the cause of Father Hecker’s canonization; to provide opportunities for the story of Father Hecker’s life, accomplishments, and sanctity to become more widely known; and to encourage prayer for favors and to keep a record of petitions and favors granted.

Members commit themselves to promote the cause of Father Hecker primarily by praying daily for Father Hecker’s cause.

Volunteers commit themselves to assist the Office for the Cause for Canonization of Father Isaac T. Hecker by implementing the mission of the Guild in their local community. Local chapters will sponsor periodic Masses for the intention of the cause of Father Hecker and other events to support his cause.

Membership in the guild is open to all. All are invited to learn more about the life, accomplishments, and sanctity of Father Hecker and to promote his canonization.

How do I join?

Simply e-mail heckercause@paulist.org, call 212-265-3495 or write: Hecker Guild c/o Father Ronald Franco, Church of St. Paul the Apostle, 405 W. 59th Street, New York, NY, 10019. It’s that easy!