Saturday Evening
December 7, 1968

## Ecclesia

It is altogether fitting that this particular evening should occasion this writing. These are the first words toward what will be, God willing, a continuing exegesis and exposition ordered to the contemplation and practice of the spiritual life, especially through the study of "all holy Scriptures."

Today is the anniversary of St. Ambrose's consecration as bishop. This fourth century bishop, confessor and Doctor of the Church authored several liturgical hymns and introduced into the west the singing of psalms antiphonally. St. Augustine was converted and baptized by St. Ambrose and both are among the four great Doctors of the Latin Church.

This evening before Sunday, December 8th, is preparation to the feast which celebrates St. Mary's conception, the first moment of her earthly career in purity.

This same Sunday will be the second Sunday of Advent, The first Sunday of Advent begins the ecclesiastical year which ends on the Saturday following the last Sunday after Pentecost. This Saturday completes the Liturgical Cycle. Thus the Lord's Day, Sunday, begins the year and, properly, the seventh day Sabbath, Saturday, ends it. The sublime cosmic sequence of Genesis is reflected in the days of the ecclesiastical year's end as is the glorious resurrection of Our Lord on the day of its beginning.

The Second Sunday in Advent
December 8, 1968

In the Book of Common Prayer the Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent is a prayer for the understanding of "all holy Scriptures".

"Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen."

Two of the most honored among Christ's intimates about whom relatively not much is written in the New Testament are His Mother and St. Andrew--the latter being one of His first two disciples. The preeminence of each in their own respects ought to draw us to contemplate how Scripture renders a superlative dignity in their right to silence and humility. In the two Gospels concerned in human generation, narratively speaking, Mary's story introduces that of her Son. St. John's Gospel mentions first by name the disciple Andrew who went in search of Simon (Peter) his brother whom he brought with him to the Christ.

When Scripture recounts events--and most of our Bible is concerned in this--one ought to attend carefully to the order in which they are recorded. There is usually a qualitative primacy to what in succession is stated first. It is unnecessary for it to be brought into the foreground later if in this respect it has played its role adequately.

So it is that in Genesis I primeval darkness is mentioned at the beginning of the Creation narrative and, as primeval, is not heard from again. Light is divided from this darkness as is land from the waters. It is not the other way about.

Analogously, St. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, bears the Light of the World. St. Andrew is the bearer of the news of revelation. His brother Peter's prominently newsworthy career in discipleship begins from this moment which he owes to his brother Andrew.

Traditionally, St. Andrew has become known as the apostle of the cross and he was crucified on two beams fastened together in the form of a "St. Andrew's cross." In the Proper of Saints November 30 is given to him--the last day before the month in which the season of Advent begins, the season of the birth of the Light of the World. He is the patron saint of Scotland the name of which country means darkness - skotia (Gr.).

Perhaps the name Mary derives from a Hebrew root meaning 'rebellion' and 'bitterness.' If rebellion, then Mary's humility before the angel" ... be it unto me according to thy word" becomes the more emphatic. If bitterness, then her title "Our Lady of Sorrows" is appropriately derived etymologically as well as obviously biographically.

Sometimes the name Mary is associated with 'water' (L. mare, 'sea'). Water is a primeval element. It is interesting in this regard to note that the admonition of Jesus to Nicodemus bears an analogy: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." John 3:5. Jesus Christ was himself born of Mary (sater?) and the Holy Spirit.

The I Ching gives the months approximately November through January to K'an, the Abysmal (water). Hexagrams associated with Nov.-Dec.: 2, 64, 39, 27, 61; Dec.-Jan.: 24, 3, 15, 38, 46; Jan.-Feb.: 19, 62, 4, 42, 53.

Kan, Water, is characterized as rebellious and bitter.