

CRUCIFIX *The Seven Days of Holy Week, Rome, 2018*

THURSDAY Beta: mid-morning, The Vatican Library

*The new supreme poet, Dr. Andreas Christianus, dressed in the black contrition clothes, of an Eliotan Ash Wednesday, black chinos and black polo shirt, was blitzing his way, around the Vatican Library, blowing away in thought, Dante and Milton and Joyce, as the panzer Cardinal, had shot through the Roman Catholic hierarchy, to the pinnacle of preferment of the whitest cloth, of the starry hierarchy of the Church. He thought about *Torch*, contemporary spirituality books and weak homilies at Blackfriars.

'I'll just write the New Gospel', he thought simply to himself, wearily, weary, of career religious. And then, he thought of his Irish *Sacerdos, veritas et servus*, overseeing all, in Heaven.

*Tap, tap, tap; tap, tap, tap...

Stooped and serene, wanderingly went, the awkward flow, of the age-diminished figure, beyond the stoically halted, wandering scholar, Dr. Andreas Christianus, and soon, he was snaffled into the gloom and hidden majesties and vaulting riches of the elliptical recesses of the Vatican Library. Away, behind him, the giganticness of the library fell away, and before him, the drawing spaces engulfed him.

Tap, tap, tap; tap, tap, tap...

The white black, black white ritualising dress of religious life, of Dominican embellishments decorated his shoulders, like the eagle-like paraphernalia on the shoulder of a Roman general, white wool wrapped within black. Figures drifted around him, all morphing and coalescing, within the shaping guidance of the stacks and shelves and desks and lines. He drifted off into the abyss of the Vatican Library, caught up and calmed within the eternity of its entity.

The ancient Italian religious advanced. Hither, went the white cane first:

Tap, tap, tap; tap, tap, tap...

Snaking away plotted piecemeal, the leading white cane led, a poor counterpart to the leading staff of Moses. Gloom ravished him roundly.

Tap, tap, tap; tap, tap, tap...

Andreas Christianus, the wandering scholar, of *ieri's* telephone message, shook off long unslaked slumber, from scholarly pursuits, and set himself to a mental reclamation of the Vatican Library, that an Austin Flannery, friendly Dominican, had shown him around, when he had been young, holy and innocent, and nineteen. He had borne the weight of that book within him, fully committed to memory, but the figure of Stephen Dedalus was creaking now, entombed within the Sepulchre of Modernism, with Old Possum's T.S. Eliot too, the arch anti-seminarian and arch anti-priest, and the guru, both hopelessly redundant today, the former, so attractive then, for a presentation of other worlds, and other, unordinary theorems of being. He said briefly, some Postmodern names, 'Beckett, Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez', and then pondered in his heart, the desecration of the *logos* in *Finnegans Wake*. The seed letters of INRI, had not fallen on stony ground in the parable of *The Christ Sonnets*, and Poundian new of *Eucharist*.

What did he know of the Vatican Library?

He smiled inwardly at Milton's Poems of 1643, to Oxford's Bodleian, after publication, posted, self-importantly sent. He thought of self-important Stephen too, wrapped upon the point of the ashplant, pressing himself into the earth, to draw out from the sensational sweet mother, the stuff of his being, the ambrosia of that prose's lusciousness, like an elephant, emptying his proboscis of water, onto the floppy tree leaves of Milton's Eden.

Andreas took a tooth-pick to the adolescent's reclamation of him, and rehoused, shot himself out to an interior survey of the magnificence of St. Peter's and the wonder of the Vatican.

Vatican City overflowed Vatican City, the City of the Vatican overflowed Vatican City.

"He is a biblical scholar, yes?"

Catholicus hesitated.

"No, writer; he is a writer, a canonical writer".

"What is he here to write about?"

Dominic coughed up gutturally:

"He's a *chiesa* writer, - he writes just for the Church, just for the *Logos*, - Jesus.

What can I say, in *Italia*? He's the new *sommo poeta*, better than Dante, the Popes' beloved Dante, but he's English, and he writes in English, like the puritan poet, Milton. That Irish novelist Joyce, is finished too. I've seen such homilies, such sermons, such homilies, such sermons, based on Leo the Great and Cardinal Newman...sweet rhetoric, rhetoric, rhetoric, *New Tracts for our Times*, chick-pea and *De Oratore*. He writes wonders, for the Church, just for God, he writes wonders, just for God". His voice trailed off.

And, Fr. Dominic Catholicus OP, sent reams of circulating hands, upwards, gesturing, into the recesses of the Vatican Library...