

# Fraternité St Pie X – Society of St Pius X

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### The significance of October 13

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

The mystery of Fatima —and with it peace in the world— is largely centered on the mystery of the Holy Father, especially with the consecration of Russia and the revelation of the Third Secret. Margherita Guarducci, the epigrapher and archeologist who identified the bones of the apostle St Peter in the Vatican back in 1968 made a most interesting research on the actual date of the death of St Peter. The following text is taken from a summary of her in-depth research published in 1968 in Naples: “La data del martirio di san Pietro”, in *La Parola del passato: Rivista di studi antichi*, No. 267. Her sources are the first letter of Saint Clement to the Corinthians, the Annals of Tacitus, and two anonymous texts of the first century, the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Ascension of Isaiah*. See <http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/PETEMART.HTM>

According to Tacitus, the Christians whom he describes as a “considerable multitude”, were condemned to death not so much for causing the fire of Rome (July 64) but because they were guilty of “hatred towards the human race”. This was a serious charge because the identification of the human race with the empire itself meant that anyone so charged was considered an enemy of the empire. The execution of the condemned, according to Tacitus’ information, took place during grandiose circus spectacles, for which Nero made available his own circus in the Vatican that was the principal adornment of his gardens. In fact, the Circus Maximus—the usual venue for Rome’s *circensia ludrica*—could not be used this time because of fire damage.

Tacitus goes on to add an interesting detail: Nero himself honoured the Vatican spectacles with his presence, mixing with the crowd disguised as a chariot driver and racing around the circus track. The question now when exactly were these events held.

Tacitus has no hesitation in establishing the year 64 for these. If we look at the series of events the historian lists as having happened between the fire of Rome (July 18-19) and the end of the year, we can establish that the Vatican spectacles took place in the first half of October. Nor is it difficult to prove that between the end of 64 and Nero's death on June 9, 68 there are no other periods in which there was anti-Christian persecution of the type that Tacitus and Clement

describe. It is also useful to note that the period between the end of September 66 and the beginning of 68 can be excluded without doubt since that was the period of Nero's travels in Greece.

But, confirming the dating proposed for the circus spectacles and, therefore, for Peter's martyrdom, are two other important, anonymous, texts in Greek contained in a papyrus conserved in Vienna today. They are the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Ascension of Isaiah*. These texts (belonging to the so-called "apocalyptic literature", a very common category between the end of the first century and the first half of the second which used prophetic and symbolic language to interpret historical events of the time) are so well informed on the history of the Neronian period that they must have been written not long after events in 64 (not after the year 80, perhaps). After addressing Nero's infamies, the authors of the two texts announce his punishment as imminent. According to the author of the *Apocalypse*, it would be none other than Peter's martyrdom that would mark the beginning of the emperor's end. This statement is echoed in the *Ascension* text which affirms that Nero's kingdom would last for "three years, seven months and 27 days" after the apostle's death. If we calculate three years, seven months and 27 days previous to Nero's death (June 9, 68), we arrive at the year 64 and October 13 to be precise: this date falls perfectly within the period in which, according to the Tacitus passage, we have set the unleashing of Nero's persecutions.

The date calculated chronologically three years, seven months and 27 days previous to Nero's death is confirmed by another decisive point. October 13 was not just any ordinary day. It was the tenth anniversary of Nero's ascent to the throne, his *dies imperii*. These anniversaries were important dates in the Romans' official calendar at the time of the empire. Numerous sources certify that between the first and fourth centuries, they were celebrated more or less solemnly with sacrifices, feasts, contests and donations to the public by the emperor. It has also been noted that it was on the occasion of these anniversaries that Jews and Christians would often be sacrificed. Saint Polycarp's martyrdom coincides with the *dies imperii* of Antoninus Pius and that of the Christians of Lyons with the *dies imperii* of Marcus Aurelius. It is highly likely, then, that the Emperor Nero, who loved manifestations to be as spectacular as possible, would have promoted cruel spectacles for his *decennalia*, his tenth anniversary. It is highly likely that he would have organized the execution of Christians who were already condemned on charges of being enemies of the empire.

From a study of this whole series of testimonies, we can draw two significant conclusions. Firstly the hypothesis, founded on Tacitus' testimony that Nero's persecution in which Peter also suffered martyrdom happened in October 64, is confirmed. Secondly, it appears extremely likely that we must set the date of the martyrdom of the Prince of the Apostles at October 13 that year.

"Upon this Rock I will build My Church!" Yes, the cornerstone of the whole mystery of the Church is the papacy. We see this from a tragic angle right now as the Roman Synod is about to open its doors and the faithful sons and daughters of the Church are begging the Holy Father to confirm his brethren in the faith and in sound morals. No one on earth can speak with as much power as the Vicar of Christ. His authority is truly unique and universal, he is the guardian of morals, and even the world is forced to acknowledge that.

Thus, isn't it a heavenly master's stroke to have chosen the date of October 13 as the solemn *finale* of the apparitions of Fatima when one discovers it was the very date of St Peter's martyrdom?

The Pope *will* one day consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart, and a time of peace will then, only then, be given to the world. Let us storm Heaven during this month with our rosaries, sacrifices and Holy Communion for Holy Mother Church "and for the Holy Father".

Father Daniel Couture  
District Superior