

The Roman Forum
Twenty-First Gardone Riviera Summer Symposium
&
First International Catholic Christendom Congress
July 1st-July 12th, 2013 (11 nights)

***The Divine Comedy Versus the Theater of the Absurd:
Navigating a Path Between Scylla and Charybdis***

Catholic Christendom is meant to be a social “stage” upon which “the drama of truth” can be performed by men and women utilizing innumerable natural and supernatural tools of both individual and communal character. Although this drama does indeed require personal commitment and action, such free involvement cannot be fully truthful or effective without the intellectual assistance of everything from theology and philosophy to history, economics, and sociology; from architecture to city planning; from literature to art and music. It also desperately requires the authoritative intervention of the Church, the State, and all other corporate institutions besides. It is only in this many-faceted environment of individual and social interaction that that happy “divine comedy” ---the working out of eternal life with God--- can most successfully be played out.

Such a fertile Catholic setting stands in vivid contrast to the tragically impoverished stage provided man by modern civilization. Modernity cheapens and ultimately annihilates the drama of life, placing a variety of crippling and arbitrary limitations on the number of intellectual, literary, artistic, and authoritative social aids made available to the individual on his naturalist journey to nowhere. It replaces the divine comedy with what amounts to a theater of the absurd. It abandons a magnificent feast for a mess of pottage.

A study of the nature and the effect of these two diametrically opposed civilizations is crucially important for Catholics the world over. Nevertheless, it is, perhaps, most important for American Catholics, who repeatedly commit social suicide by supporting either “liberal” or “conservative” forces that represent nothing other than two faces of the same false, naturalist, a-moral, anti-social, and highly destructive Enlightenment theme of individual freedom. Liberals focus on personal sexual libertinism, conservatives on both personal economic as well as national patriotic libertinism. They limit their debate to the choice of shipwreck on the Democratic Scylla or the Republican Charybdis. So long as they continue to prefer one or the other piece from the anti-social repertoire of the theater of the absurd there is no hope for rebuilding Christendom. For, tragically, acceptance of one form of libertinism merely conditions men and women to open the door to the other.

The recent election has given American Catholics more time to learn how to navigate between certain death on the rocks of Scylla and in the whirlpool of Charybdis. But grasping such navigational skills demands profound study of the full nature of the divine comedy. This involves recognition of the fact that America is not “exceptional” and that the Catholic drama of truth is one in which believers from countries throughout the world have an equal role to play. Hence, it is only through an international congress of Catholic Christendom that its divine comedy can be properly appreciated and lovingly put to use.

Faculty, Clergy, Musicians

Dr. Miguel Ayuso-Torres (University of Madrid)
Rev. Mgr. Dr. Ignacio Barreiro-Carámbula (Human Life International)
James Bogle, Esq. (Author, *A Heart for Europe*)
Dr. Patrick McKinley Brennan (Villanova University)
Dr. Danilo Castellano (University of Udine)
Rev. Bernard Danber, O.S.A.
Bernard Dumont (editor, *Catholica*, France)
Christopher A. Ferrara, J.D. (President, ACLA)
Gregor Hochreiter (Oekonomika Institute, Vienna)
David J. Hughes (Musical Director)
James Kalb, Esq. (Author, *The Tyranny of Liberalism*)
Michael J. Matt (Editor, *The Remnant*)
Professor John Médaille (University of Dallas)
Rev. Dr. Richard Munkelt (University of Fairfield)
Dr. John C. Rao (St. John's University)
Hervé Rolland, President of Notre Dame de Chrétienté
Dr. Thomas Stark (Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule, Austria)
Rev. Richard Trezza, O.F.M.

Daily Program

Each day involves three lectures (morning and pre-dinner), and Sung Mass in the Extraordinary Rite (Tridentine Mass) at noon. There are no lectures on Sundays. Musical and theatrical entertainments take place in the garden of the *Angeli* and in the *Piazza dei Caduti* in the evenings after dinner.

Cost

The full cost of the Gardone program in a double occupancy room is **2,100 Euros**. This includes tuition, room and board (very ample breakfast and dinner with wine, beer, and other beverages at will; all gratuities also), transportation to and from Malpensa Airport in Milan, and a boat excursion on the lake. **Single rooms are extra, their price depending upon the room concerned. A number of full and partial scholarships are available.** Preference for scholarships will be given to professors, students, clergy, and seminarians. Nevertheless, anyone who genuinely cannot afford the full tuition and believes himself to be a worthy candidate for assistance may apply.

Accommodations and the Setting

Accommodation and lectures for the Gardone program are at the *Locanda agli Angeli* and the *Hotel Villa Sofia* on Lake Garda, in the foothills of the Alps in northern Italy. Both hotels are located in Gardone Sopra, a ten-minute walk from the lakefront, where free, clean beaches with a number of amenities can be found. They offer beautiful swimming pools and gardens on their premises. Meals are taken at the *Angeli* and at other *trattorie* several minutes walk away. Mass is in the parish

church, also within walking distance. Arrangements to arrive earlier or stay later, at additional cost, may be made through the director.

Gardone is within easy traveling distance of Verona, Venice, Trent, Brescia, Milan, Ravenna, Pavia and Padua. In years past, participants have rented cars to tour the area, taken private and more extensive boat trips on the lake, attended the opera in Verona, and even ventured as far away as Florence. The region offers opportunities not only for swimming, but for hiking, biking, boating and scenic walks as well. The lectures are scheduled in such a way as to allow time for recreation and sightseeing.

Transportation

Transportation to Italy must be arranged privately. Two shuttles (morning and afternoon) to Gardone will be provided from Malpensa airport only on July 1st, and one back to Malpensa on July 12th. *Participants arriving and leaving at different times or arriving at and leaving from different airports are responsible for making their own arrangements for getting to Gardone.* Gardone can be reached by shuttle from the Airport to Milano Centrale (50 minutes), train to Brescia (50 minutes), and bus to Gardone Riviera (50 minutes), or by taxi from the airport (which can be very expensive and is best arranged through the Forum).

Application

First time applicants only must include name, address, telephone number, e-mail, date of birth, occupation, academic degrees attained or pending, and the names and phone numbers of two references. ***Application should be made as soon as possible as there are only fifty places available.***

Payment

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 will secure one's reservation. Once again, space is limited, so it is advisable to send this in as soon as possible after acceptance. Payment of the remaining fee, *equivalent to 2,100 Euros as of May 10th, 2013, must be made no later than May 14th, 2013.* Deposits and all other payments must be made out to the Roman Forum and mailed to Dr. John C. Rao, 11 Carmine St. Apt. 2C, New York, NY 10014.

Final Notes

Seminar participants must eventually send us ***both their arrival and departure information.*** It is also important to let us know if you wish to arrive earlier or stay later than the scheduled symposium dates (at extra cost). We would appreciate this information by June 15th, by e-mail. A representative of the Roman Forum will meet participants at their arrival gates. Should the contact person not be found, please look for the bus driver holding a sign saying *Molinari Agency, Gardone Riviera.* His cell phone number will be sent to you by e-mail just before the departure date. In case of trouble, telephone the *Locanda agli Angeli* (from the USA, 011-39-0365-20991; from Italy, 0365-20991).

Barring the unpredictable, the weather should be sunny and quite warm/hot. We are in the foothills of the Alps, however, so one may need a sweater or light jacket for dining and sitting outside in the evening. Please also bring a light poncho or some other form of protection from a shower. If you do enjoy swimming and hiking, do not forget a bathing suit and good walking shoes. Tennis courts are available for use nearby. Access to the Internet is available from the *Angeli*, the *Villa Sofia* and the café-restaurant *La Taverna* (the latter in the main square at Gardone Sopra, two minutes away from the *Angeli*). There are ATM machines just outside the *Angeli*, and at the *Banco di Brescia*, a short distance away from the *Villa Sofia*.

Gardone's greatest difficulty is laundry. There is no laundromat in the village. Someone does stop by every day to pick up any laundry that needs to be done. This will be returned in two days. Under normal circumstances, laundry costs are expensive in Italy. With the dollar-euro exchange what it now is, it may be the greatest expenditure of your trip. There will be a general orientation at cocktail hour on Monday, July 1st at the *Angeli*. A schedule of masses, as well as information about the Sunday boat trip and excursions during the week will be handed out at that time.

Please consider giving a tax-deductible donation to support the attendance of a speaker, a member of the clergy, a seminarian, or a student. Mail all applications and send donations to:

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The Roman Forum
www.romanforum.org

“Even if the wounds of this shattered world enmesh you, and the sea in turmoil bears you along in but one surviving ship, it would still befit you to maintain your enthusiasm for studies unimpaired. Why should lasting values tremble if transient things fall?”

(Prosper of Aquitaine)