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ECHO OF SAINTS

Relics of bone give mute testimony to Catholics' history

By GRANT SASEK
IR Staff Writer

In a cavity inside the Carrara marble altar of the Cathedral of St. Helena rest bone fragments of two saints.

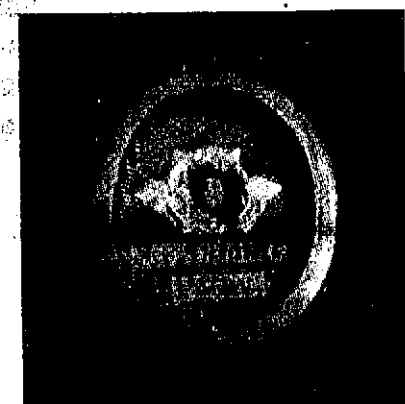
For Helena's grand structure to officially be a cathedral of the Catholic faith, it must be that way.

The bones are among the cathedral's "first class relics" that link the church's present and future securely with its past.

Today, when Helenans go to the Cathedral to celebrate Easter Sunday, they will do as Christians have done since the time when

their religion began — they will gather and worship near the remains of those they consider to be holy. In Helena's cathedral today with the faithful will be bone fragments of more than 20 different saints — some more than 1,000 years old.

THE TINY shards of bones of all but two of the saints are kept in a vault behind the altar area of the cathedral and are not taken out for Mass or other celebrations. But the tradition



St. Anthony's reliquary

of having them there is a strong one that reaches back to the time of Christ and deep into Roman soil and Christian catacombs.

THE CATACOMBS

According to literature furnished by the cathedral, the practice of Christians burying their dead in underground labyrinths was followed from the time of the Apostles to about 400 A.D., a practice some scholars believe grew in popularity after Christ was entombed in a cave.



St. Dominic's reliquary

It was during the persecutions that followed that Christians hid the remains of their martyrs in the catacombs and began worshipping there.

AFTER THE persecutions, the faithful made pilgrimages to the sites.

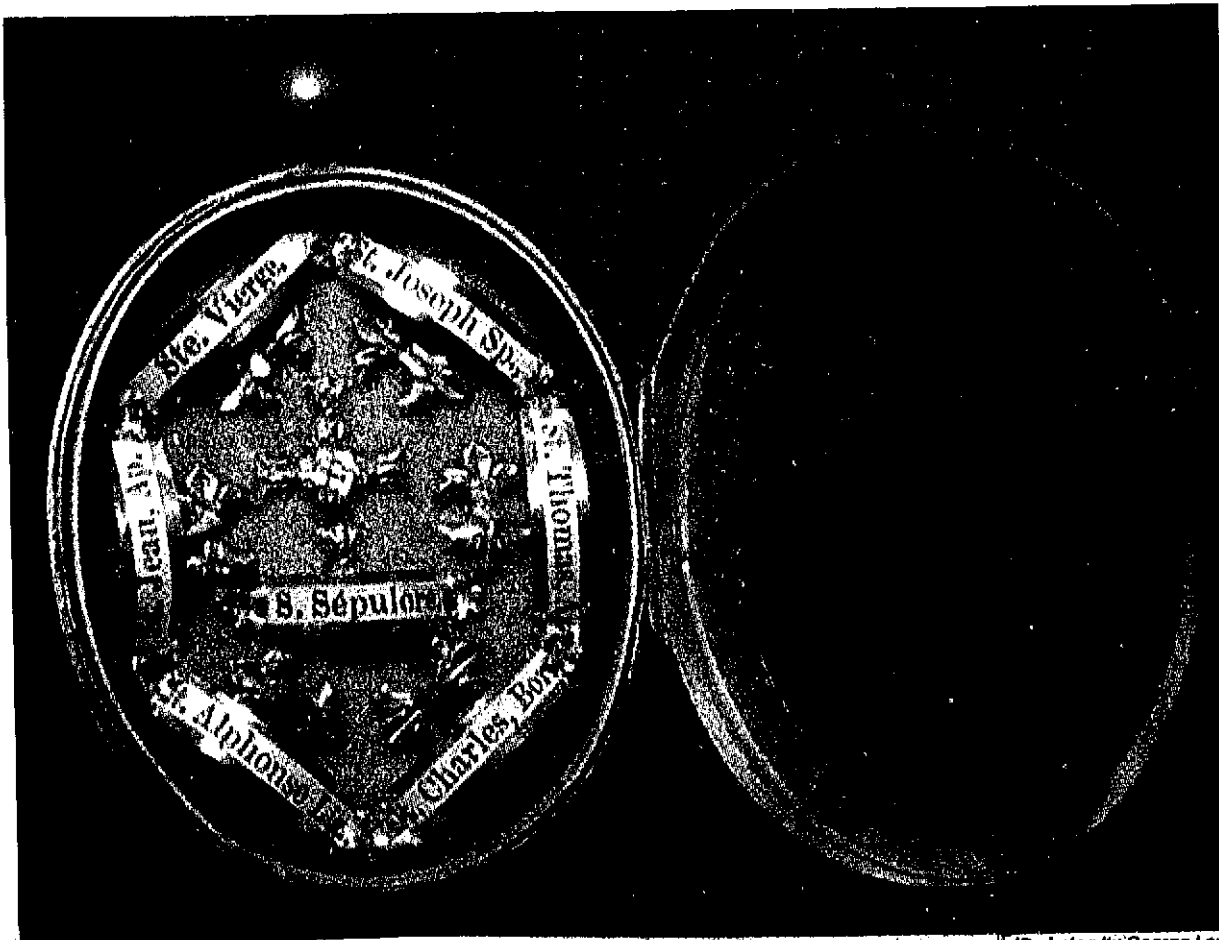
"But not everyone can go to Rome," Brother Stephen Hale, the coordinator of liturgy for the St. Helena Cathedral, said recently. So, he added, relics from Rome began going to where the worshippers were.

The tradition of celebrating Mass above or near the remains of the church's holy ones, regardless of where that church was, became church law in 270 when Pope Felix I decreed that Mass should be celebrated on the tomb of martyrs. During the 600s, Papal decree kept with the spirit but changed the requirement to cathedral high altars having to contain the relics of two saints.

THE CEREMONY

The two relics held in the altar of St. Helena's Cathedral are of Sts. Vincent and Maurice.

(More SAINTS, page 8A)



Above and below: Helena Cathedral reliquaries, which, according to the church, contain bits of the bones of various saints.

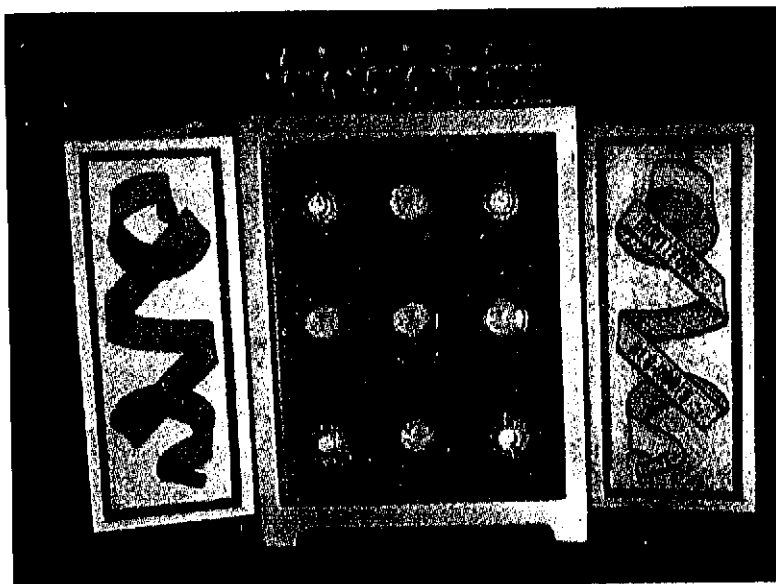
St. Helena's relic was the cross

SOME 300 YEARS after the act, the cross of Christ's crucifixion was discovered by a Roman empress named Helena — or so it is believed in the Catholic church.

Several hundred years after the birth of Christ, Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, converted to Christianity and made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. There she ordered churches built on the reputed sites of the Nativity and the Ascension.

Legend has it that during construction on Golgotha, or Calvary, workers found Christ's cross.

Constantine, who returned the freedom of religious worship to the Christians, wore one of the nails from the cross on his battle helmet.



met. He gave his mother Helena the titles "empress of the world" and "mistress of the empire."

Helena lived to be 80 years old, dying in the year 328.

■ Page 8A: The history and location of a number of relics



SEASON'S FIRST HUNT

A group of anxious Easter egg hunters dash around to collect their bounty Saturday near the Broadwater Athletic Club in Helena. About 150 children took part.

Today, there will be three more egg hunts — the Capitol lawn hunt at 1 p.m.; the East Helena hunt at 1 p.m. at Main Street Park; and an 11 a.m. hunt at O'Malley's near Canyon Ferry.

IR photo by Jon Ebel

Unknown wolf pack is found

MISSOULA (AP) — A wolf pack that hardly anyone knows about has lived for three or four years northwest of Thompson Falls, a federal wildlife biologist says.

Tricia O'Connor, with the Forest Service's Plains Ranger District, discussed the pack last week at a Plains-Paradise Chamber of Commerce meeting.

"WE don't know if it's two animals or 10," she said. "There's some evidence the pack has split up recently. That's common behavior once the pack gets to a certain size."

She estimated the pack has fewer than 10 wolves.

Ms. O'Connor said little is known about the pack, which hangs out in the upper Thompson River drainage and has had no conflicts with humans in the sparsely populated area.

THE WOLVES "have been fairly secretive and haven't caused any problems."

Their favorite prey apparently is the abundant deer in the drainage.

The pack apparently started in 1993 when a female from the Fortine pack to the north drifted into the area and had pups, she said. The female had been radio-collared, so federal wolf-recovery biologists kept track of her and later put a radio collar on one of the pups.

MS. O'CONNOR SAW some of the pack during a research flight in 1995 and since has seen many of their signs and heard their howling. Local residents also have reported their presence.

Residents seem to have accepted the presence of the wolves, Ms. O'Connor said. Few if any people live there year-round.

"Because they are coming back on their own, people seem more willing to accept them," she said.

GAS PRICES
Yesterday's Regular Unleaded

Helena	\$1.39.9
Blrdsye	\$1.38.9
Townsend	\$1.39.9
Billings	\$1.39.9
Great Falls	\$1.31.9
Bozeman	\$1.35.9
Butte	\$1.32.9

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Sports	1B
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Tornadoes sweep Tennessee and Kentucky; two are killed

You just dive down and pray to God it doesn't take you.'

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (AP) — A dozen tornadoes raked Tennessee early Saturday, pitching parked cars 300 feet and injuring nearly four dozen people.

Metal utility poles designed to withstand 160 mph winds were bent and snapped. Trees that were not

broken or uprooted were covered with bits of shredded debris.

No deaths were reported.

"That's a real miracle when you look at the damage," said Todd Womack, spokesman for Erlanger Medical Center.

Furious thunder and hail, followed

by deafening wind, sent Kelly and Trudy Smith into the basement with their 10-year-old son Shannon. Minutes later, a pine tree crashed through the roof upstairs.

"I was glad I recognized the sound and we could run for cover," Kelly Smith said. "You know it's coming

and you can't do nothing. You just dive down and pray to God it doesn't take you. We're just lucky to be alive."

The same broad weather system produced a half-dozen tornadoes in

(More TORNADOES, page 8A)