Prayer
Scripture: 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1
Hymn: 543 "Flee as a Bird"

What were the Catholics doing while the Protestant Reformation was unfolding? They were engaged in the Counter-Reformation, or, as Catholics themselves prefer to call it, the Roman Reformation. Some Catholics call it "The Roman Revival." Catholics insist that the term, Counter-Reformation, gives too much credit to the Protestants. They claim that the Roman Church had begun to reform itself before Luther came on the scene and that the Protestant Reformation was more of an interruption and distraction that actually warped the reformation that had already begun. Some like to insist that it was more revival than reformation.

Actually the Catholic side of this sixteenth century movement was all three. Before Luther appeared there were developments in the Roman church that would be tributary to reform and revival. These movements toward reform were slow compared to the rapid development of the Protestant reforms. Catholic reform had made very little progress before it confronted the schism known as the Protestant Reformation. Catholic reform had to battle the Protestants for several years before it could capture its own papacy and make it a leader in reform. There is no denying that the Protestant Reformation greatly stimulated self-reforming Catholicism to much greater effort. Counter-Reformation is an apt designation for the self-defense and counter attack provoked by the Protestants. At the height of the struggle this self-defense and counter attack demanded a large share of the resources of the growing Catholic Reform. The more developed Catholic movement had to devote its energies to resistance and reconquest clearly in desperation and with determination. The Protestant threat sharpened definitions and greatly influenced the choices of emphases in the developing Catholic Reform. Catholics can claim there were spontaneous manifestations of religious revival for which Protestants cannot claim any credit. There is some justification for their claiming that the highest Catholic achievements were those of men and women who believed themselves to be seeking Christ rather than fighting Luther. There was a Catholic Reformation. Catholic and Protestant Reformations were different expressions of a burst of life that appeared in Christianity and ran concurrently. This burst of life came at a time in history in which there were also amazing manifestations of vigor in geographic explorations, commerce, colonization, scientific inventions and discoveries, art, literature, political theory, and education.

THE CATHOLIC REFORMATION IN SPAIN:

Those who claim that the Catholic Reformation was well under way before Luther point to Spain. As the Reformation developed devout Catholics looked to the Spanish Reformation as the model of Catholic Reform. This reformation which came a generation before Luther was largely the work of King Ferdinand, Queen Isabella, and Cardinal Ximenes. They made Spain the model of Catholic orthodoxy--a country with one religion. The Mohammedans and Jews were expelled. The monasteries were reformed. Clergy and church reforms eliminated many abuses that had brought reproach on the church. The power of the pope in Spain was greatly limited with king and queen gaining almost complete control over the church in Spain. Education, especially for the clergy, was greatly
improved by reforms in the universities that encouraged Renaissance learning—especially the works of Erasmus and the study of Biblical languages. Inquisition repressed heresy. This reformation in Spain produced the Jesuits, the most influential new reforming order in the Catholic church. From this Spanish church came some of the greatest saints of the Reformation era. It produced the great champion of exploited peoples, Bartolomé de Las Casas and also, Pedro Claver, a pioneer in the struggle to replace war with law in international relations. Spanish missionaries led in the extensive geographic spread of Christianity in the New World. Spanish rulers led Catholic efforts to crush Protestantism by force.

FERDINAND AND ISABELLA:

The marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella in 1469 opened the way for a united Spain. Ferdinand was heir to the kingdom of Aragon. He succeeded to the crown in 1479. With Aragon went Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands. Isabella was queen of Castile and Leon. Later in 1512 Ferdinand acquired the part of Navarre south of the Pyrenees. Their marriage made Spain one of the leading powers of Europe. They would make Spain the great power of that time and in many ways the center of world culture.

Both sovereigns were devout Catholics. Isabella was strong willed, energetic, independent. In the marriage agreement she had carefully guarded her supremacy over Castile. Ferdinand was subtle, unscrupulous, ambitious. Pope Innocent VIII gave them the title "Catholic Kings", a title confirmed to them by Pope Alexander VI. Ferdinand and Isabella believed in the supreme power of the monarchy, in royal justice, good kingship, and in protecting the rights of the weak. They understood and respected the native customs and laws of the peoples of their different countries. They broke the power of the troublesome nobles who had long kept Spain divided. In 1492 they conquered Granada, the last Moslem kingdom in Spain. In return for this favor to the Christian faith they extracted from the pope a large measure of control over the church in their kingdom. They were able to secure full control over religion in the New World. They forced the pope to promise not to put foreigners over Spanish churches. Soon they gained the right to make nominations to church positions in Spain and finally they were able to make appointments. Papal bulls could not be published in Spain without permission and approval from the crown. The pope made these concessions because he needed the backing of the Spanish rulers.

ISABELLA AND RELIGIOUS REFORMS:

While Ferdinand was busy with crafty diplomacy Isabella worked for moral reform. When she came to the throne the Spanish church was as bad as in other countries. The monasteries were notorious for lazy, ignorant and even immoral monks. The clergy were often ignorant and neglected their work. They abused their exemption from trial in civil courts. Church courts were lax. Concubinage was common.

In 1491 Pope Alexander VI authorized the Catholic Kings to reform the monasteries. Isabella, guided by her chaplain, Talevera, began working to raise the standards of the monasteries and of the clergy. When Talevera became Archbishop of Granada in 1492, Cardinal Mendoza of Toledo recommended that she choose Ximénes de Cisneros for her chaplain. Cardinal Mendoza in his private life was not what the queen wanted in her clergy but he was liberal in his patronage of learning. In 1484 he founded a new college at Valladolid that did much to raise educational standards. He encouraged the spread of the new Renaissance learning.

In Ximénes de Cisneros Isabella found a dauntless, reliable, saintly,
hard working and extraordinarily able leader for reform. Ximénes came from a very poor family but managed to get a good education in civil and canon law. He studied for several years in Rome. He returned to Spain with a papal appointment to a benefice in the archbishopric of Toledo when one became vacant. The archbishop refused to recognize the papal document and also despised Ximénes because he was from an humble family. When Ximénes refused to give up his claim on an office the archbishop threw him in prison for six years. Upon his release he was given an office by another bishop and demonstrated great ability in the office. He joined the Observant Franciscans. Franciscans were divided into two factions, the Conventual Franciscans noted for their laxness, and the Observant Franciscans who insisted on strictly following the rules of St. Francis of holy living. For three years Ximénes devoted himself to austerity, solitude, prayer, and meditation. The archbishop had been so impressed with him that he recommended to Isabella that she make him her confessor. With encouragement from Isabella he began to work to reform the Conventuals, persuading them to become Observants. He met stubborn opposition but he did not give up and when he died in 1517 not a single Conventual remained in Spain.

Isabella was so impressed with Ximénes that in 1495 she had him appointed Archbishop of Toledo at the death of Mendoza. With great vision, determination of will, and unusual administrative ability, and with encouragement and backing from his queen, he worked to purify the Spanish church. In spite of the huge revenues of the Archbishopric he continued to live as a strict Observant Franciscan. He devoted the revenues to the care of the poor, ransoming captives of war and piracy, and in educational work. He purged the clergy of the unfit, the immoral, the lazy and the ignorant. He reformed the medieval university of Salamanca and also the university of Valladolid with emphasis on the theological studies. He founded new universities in Alcalá, Seville, and Toledo. The curriculum emphasized Hebrew and Greek, Theology, Ethics, and Biblical Exegesis. In theology emphasis was placed on Augustine and Thomas Aquinas rather than on the Scholastics, Duns Scotus and William of Occam. Ximénes encouraged the New Learning and Erasmus became popular in Spain. The satires of Erasmus on the follies of church and monastery were highly esteemed in the universities and in the court. Devoted students of Erasmus called themselves Erasmians.

At Alcalá, which Ximénes founded in 1508, he gathered a group of able scholars to help him prepare the famous Complutensian (from Complutum, the Latin name of Alcalá) Polyglot Bible containing the Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Aramaic. It has been called the first effort in the Reformation period at a critical Greek text. When the Swiss printer, Froben, heard that Ximénes was working on a critical Greek text he urged Erasmus to rush to get his Greek text on the market first. Ximenes and his helpers actually completed their work before Erasmus completed his and it was more carefully done. The Erasmus text was published in 1516. Ximénes met considerable opposition to his project. Churchmen criticised him for including the Greek and the Hebrew. Ximenes pointed out that he had put the blessed Latin Vulgate in the middle between the schismatic Greek and the infidel Hebrew, just as our Blessed Lord was crucified between two thieves. Finally Ximénes' work received approval and was finally published in 1523. There was little demand for such a work among the Catholics of the time and Erasmus was already the text of Protestants.

Ximénes made full use of the new printing press to circulate Christian literature in Spain. He also revived the use of the ancient Spanish Mozarabic liturgy in the Spanish churches in the place of the Roman liturgy.
THE SPANISH INQUISITION:

An important force in the cleansing and purifying of the Spanish church was the Inquisition. Spain had more self-confessed non-Christians than any other country in Western Europe. Spain had a large Jewish population. Many were wealthy and prominent. Jewish capital and skills were an important part of the Spanish economy. Jews had married into highly placed Spanish families. Ferdinand was said to have some Jewish blood. The wealth and power of the Jews aroused jealousy and hatred. As the reforming zeal mounted in Spain the Jews' religion became the target of fanatical zeal. There were widespread massacres in the fifteenth century. Fear of the massacres and the eloquence of the evangelist Vincent Ferrer, led thousands of Jews to accept baptism. The baptized Jews were called Marranos or Conversos. Some of these converted Jews rose to prominence in the church. Their wealth and their prominence aroused considerable popular feeling against them. This hostile feeling grew as rumors spread that many of the conversions were purely nominal and that many Marranos continued to practise their old religious rites in secret.

In 1492 Ferdinand and Isabella ordered all Jews who held to their ancestral faith either to be baptized or to leave the country. Thousands hastened to be baptized. Thousands fled from the country taking their wealth with them. It was a much greater loss to Spain than was recognized at first.

In the terms of surrender of Granada in 1492 the Moslems were guaranteed protection for themselves and their property. At first the Archbishop respected the pledge but sought to convert the Moslems by persuasion and tact. Thousands were baptized. When Ximenes became Archbishop he believed the methods of his predecessor were too lenient and slow; he adopted the more strenuous way of putting pressure on the Moslems to convert. When the Moors rebelled, the rebellion was crushed by ruthless force. Ferdinand and Isabella gave the Moors the choice of emigration or baptism. In 1502 the edict of emigration or baptism was extended to Castile. Thousands left Spain. Many thousands elected to be baptized as the easier course. The converted Moslems were called Moriscos. As national and Catholic zeal increased there was strong popular feeling against the Moriscos. There was considerable envy of their prosperity. There were widespread rumors that many Moriscos secretly practised their ancestral religion. The situation was further complicated by the fact that Ximénes' efforts to abolish clerical concubinage had lead a considerable number of clergy to convert to Islam rather than give up their concubines. In 1478 Ferdinand and Isabella had applied to the pope for the right to organize the Inquisition in Spain as an instrument for purifying the church. Thomas de Torquemada, prior of a Dominican house in Segovia and of a Dominican prior in Seville, was chosen Inquisitor-General. Torquemada was learned, sternly ascetic in his private life, strictly observed the law of poverty, was deeply pious, uncompromising and a zealous reformer. The zeal turned into fanaticism. In the beginning the Inquisition had power only over Christians. Jews and Moslems were beyond its power. But with the expulsion of Jews and Moslems who would not convert and with the baptism of thousands of both Jews and Moslems the power and importance of the Inquisition grew. It came to be directed primarily against suspected Marranos and Moriscos. Numbers were brought to the stake and burned. The majority were heavily and ruinously fined and subjected to humiliating penances. It has been estimated that as many as 150,000 Jews fled from Spain. The Inquisition was aimed at any practice strange to the mediaeval church. Such questionable practices and ideas were relentlessly crushed. Inquisition did not bring to the Spanish church new expressions of religion in the Protestant sense. The aim was to
requicken religious life within the limits of the Middle Ages. The hierarchy, the priesthood, the sacraments, and the medieval theology were protected. The pope was recognized as the head of the church. The great novelty was that his power was greatly limited in Spain. The Crown undertook the duties the pope had been neglecting. The emphasis on the knowledge of Scripture was limited to the clergy. The laity were forbidden to read Scripture in the vernacular. The slight emphasis on the New Learning was largely limited to the clergy. The laity continued in ignorance.

When Catholics had in mind, when they called for a reformation throughout Europe like that in Spain, what they usually had in mind was an Inquisition that would put the fear of anything new into the hearts of the people. The Inquisition would continue in Spain after the death of Torquemada in 1498 and would prevent Luther from getting a hearing or reading or firm foothold in Spain.

Too late the Spanish felt the economic loss of the Jews and Moslems. The Flemings, Germans, and Genoese who were brought in for their industrial skills came to enrich themselves and to exploit Spain rather than to build Spain.

THE ATTEMPT TO FORCE THE SPANISH REFORMATION ON THE REST OF EUROPE:

Ferdinand died in 1516. Isabella had died in 1504. She was followed on the throne of Castile by her daughter, Juana the Insane, but Ferdinand virtually ruled the country. Charles I, the grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella, son of Juana and Philip of Burgundy, came to the throne of Spain and in 1519 became emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, as Charles V. He was a devout Catholic. One of his main goals was to crush the rising Protestant Reformation and to restore and exalt the Catholic faith. He was an ardent supporter of the principles of the Spanish Reformation. He managed to secure the papal throne for his tutor, Adrian VI, of the Netherlands. Pope Adrian tried in his short pontificate to bring Reformation to Rome but he thoroughly alienated the Romans. Rome did not want to be reformed. Adrian would be the last non-Italian pope until the Pole, John Paul II. The pope who followed Adrian, Clement VII, was a Renaissance prince who had little understanding or appreciation for reform. His political ambitions left little room for spiritual considerations and religious leadership. The Spanish Reformation was not enough to awaken Rome to the need for a thorough going Reformation.