Prayer
Scripture: Ephesians 5:23-32
Hymn: 351 "Beneath the Cross of Jesus"

The feeling that the church needed reforming was wide spread before and in the early years of the Reformation. Some who wanted reform left the church or were forced out of it and tried to reform from the outside. There were many who tried to reform from within. The reforms in the Spanish church were some of the most spectacular and thorough going but there were others deeply committed to the Roman way who devoutly desired a reformation. Some of these attempts to reform from within grew into lasting orders within the Roman church while others were of short duration.

THE ORATORY OF DIVINE LOVE:
Those who insist that the Catholic church would have reformed itself without the provocation given by Luther point to the Oratory of Divine Love as one of the early attempts to correct things in the church that needed to be corrected.

The Oratory of Divine Love was a society of pious laymen and prelates founded in Rome in 1517 in the Pontificate of Leo X--founded earlier in the very year Luther began the Protestant Reformation by nailing his Theses to the church door. The Oratory was made up of between fifty and sixty of the most distinguished, learned, and pious men in Rome. They met for prayer and meditation in the Church of St. Silvester and St. Dorothea in the Trastevere. They were not bound by any new vows nor did they attempt to organize a new order. They were concerned over the growing decadence of the church and of society. They were especially concerned about the negligent and irreverent way the divine service was often conducted even in Rome. They wanted to restore due reverence and dignity to the worship service. By special exercises and devotions they hoped to reawaken spiritual life. They were all men distinguished by their love of the New Learning of the Renaissance, by the strict purity of their own lives, and by their devotion to the theology of St. Augustine. They were men of stern, almost Puritan ideals, who rejected the pagan side of the Renaissance. For them the true church was the Catholic Church with its long history, its hierarchy and its visible head in the Bishop of Rome. For them the only reformation was the correcting of the things amiss in it. The fellowship consisted of men of very different temperaments brought together by a common purpose to serve the church they deeply loved.

One of the members of the group was the parish priest of the church where the meetings were held, Guiliano Dati. Three members would later become cardinals: Jacopo Sadoleto, Bishop of Carpentras; Giovanni Matteo Giberti, Bishop of Verona; and Giovanni Pietro Caraffa, Bishop of Chieti. Caraffa would later become Pope Paul IV (1555-9). Among the members were Gaetano da Thiene, who would be canonized later; and Luigi Lippomano who later became Bishop of Verona. One way they showed their zeal was visiting and ministering in hospitals and prisons.

Under Pope Adrian VI (1522-3) the example of the Oratory was
followed in Verona, Vicenze, Brescia and other cities. The members of these confraternities came from the upper classes.

On May 6, 1527 the army of the Emperor Charles V captured Rome, shut up Pope Clement VII in the castle of San Angelo, and subjected the city to every barbarity. By sacking Rome the emperor was punishing the pope for giving aid to the French in the war between Spain and France for control of Italy. The emperor's army, composed mostly of Spaniards and Germans, was short of food and money. The soldiers mutinied and pillaged the city without mercy. About four thousand people were killed. Convents were invaded, altars stripped, tombs profaned, the library of the Vatican was sacked, and many works of art destroyed. The Oratory of Divine Love was scattered.

Shortly after the sack of Rome the more important members of the Oratory of Divine Love gathered in Venice where a number of them had fled. They found new recruits. The most prominent among the new members were a distinguished senator, a layman, Gasparo Contarini, who later became a cardinal; Gregorio Cortese, Abbot of San Georgio Maggiore, who had also been Abbot of the Benedictine convent on the Island of Lerina on the Riviera; and another layman from England, Reginald Pole, who would also become a cardinal, and who would play a very important role in Mary's attempt to return England to Catholicism. Another member was Antonio Bruccioli, the author of a new translation of the Scriptures into Italian; also Marcantonio Flaminio and Giovanni Morone, Bishop of Modena and later cardinal. The members of the Oratorio met in the beautiful garden of San Giorgio Maggiore. Humanists and churchmen there exchanged views on reforming the church.

Venice provided a safe retreat. It was a trading city in close connection with Germany. It enjoyed a freedom of thought beyond that of most cities of the time. Luther's works circulated and were read in the circles of the better educated who were sympathetic to the humanistic Renaissance learning. With the exception of Caraffa, most of the men had some sympathy with evangelical doctrine. Contarini and his closest friends had no little sympathy for the doctrine of justification by faith. Sadoletto admitted that he found some things in the German Reformation that he admired. None of the men had any sympathy for breaking with the pope or separating from the church.

Similar fellowships continued to spring up in Italian cities and often included well-born, cultured, and pious ladies. In Padua and Modena the confraternities became Christian academies. Giovanni Morone, Bishop of Modena, made it such a stronghold of Catholic reformers that he narrowly escaped the charge of heresy. The University of Padua had among its teachers some of the most eminent scholars of the day. It was a center of Christian Renaissance and Catholic reform. Reginald Pole spent several years there attracted by the union of scholarship and holiness of life with zeal for practical reform. Sadoletto, Bishop of Carpentras, was influenced by the example of Modena.

Gilberti became a pioneer and model of Catholic reform. He was the illegitimate son of a Genoese admiral. Under Pope Clement VII, a Medici pope, he made rapid advancement in the church. He wanted to be a monk but was drawn into administrative duties. His home in Rome became a center for humanists. He received an appointment as non-resident bishop of Verona and also held other benefices. In the circle of the Oratory of Divine Love he was a close friend of
Caraffa. In 1528, in his mid-thirties, he took up residence in his see in Verona and resigned all his other benefices. He began a strictly ascetic way of life and devoted himself wholly to his diocese. He went from village to village, examining priests, reconciling enemies, caring for the poor, insisting that the clergy perform their duties and maintain a worthy way of life, and caring for souls. He greatly improved the services in the parish churches, enjoined on his priests weekly confession, had a bell rung at the elevation of the host, and had the sacrament reserved in a tabernacle on the high altar. He reformed both secular and regular clergy, encouraged confraternities for the care of the poor, prepared a catechism and a manual for preachers. A number of other prelates attempted to follow his example.

ROMAN EVANGELICALS:

By and large Italians who had any sympathy for ideas they found in the works of Protestant Reformers belonged to the educated rich in high places. They detested the storm in Germany. Usually it went no further than the discussions in their own circle. They were not numerous and developed no leader or consolidated movement. They remained unorganized and without princely support.

The greater part of reformation sentiment that resembled the Protestants was largely confined to the sons of the rich and powerful in their university years. It was a kind of phase that some of the young men went through while in the university. Contarini felt that the way to handle the problem was to be patient and to give the boys a chance to grow up. He advocated placing them in positions of responsibility as early as possible believing that this would settle them down. Caraffa differed strongly. He felt what was needed was to turn the Inquisition loose on them and put the fear of God, the pope, the church, and the Inquisition in them.

Protestantism never became a popular movement in Italy. It was largely confined to the elite. The masses were steeped in ignorance, superstition, and fear of Inquisition. They were horrified at the rumors of what was happening in Germany.

There were a few who went farther in a Protestant direction. The Duchess Renee gathered a circle sympathetic with Calvin. Juan Valdes (1500-1541), a Spaniard of high rank, employed in the service of Charles V, gathered in Naples a circle accused of a devout Evangelical mysticism. His disciple, Benedetto of Mantua, in 1540 published a book that became popular in this circle, entitled, The Benefits of Christ's Death. Another disciple of Valdes, Pietro Martire Vermigli (150-1562), whose father had been an admirer of Savonarola, himself prior of the Monastery of St. Peter in Naples, went over to the Protestants and became a professor of theology in Strassburg and Oxford. Galeazzo Caraccioli, marquis of Vico and Caraffa's own nephew, joined Calvin in Geneva. This probably helps account for Caraffa's strong feelings toward any who showed any signs of sympathizing with Protestants.

POPE PAUL III'S COMMISSION TO STUDY REFORM:

The movement for reform represented by and led by the Oratorio of Divine Love did not become a power in official circles in Rome until the pontificate of Paul III. The Emperor Charles V had put great pressure on the pope to call a reforming council. The pope delayed. He conferred a cardinal's hat on Contarini. A little later he made Caraffa, Sadoletto, and Pole cardinals. Then he made cardinals of Morone and Federigo Fregoso, a Genoese of noble birth, Bishop of Gubbio and a distinguished Orientalist. This made six new
cardinals—all from the circle of the Oratorio of Divine Love. The leaders among the Catholic reformers in Italy were summoned to Rome and on January 30, 1536, a Bull was read in the Consistory for the reform of many papal offices. The Bull was not published.

In the summer of 1536 Pope Paul III appointed a commission of nine to report on the reforms that were needful. The members of the commission were Contarini, Caraffa, Sadoletto, Giberti, Pole, Fregoso, Cortese—all members of the Oratory of Divine Love—and Aleander, who had been papal nuncio at the Diet of Worms, and Tomaso Badia, Master of the Sacred Palace. The commission went to work and submitted its report to the pope in 1537. It was entitled Consilium delectorum cardinalium et aliorum praelatorum de emendanda ecclesia. It was a thorough and hard hitting report—as hard hitting as anything the Protestants had done. It was a scathing indictment of the Roman Church, and an urgent call for a radical reformation. The fountain head of all evils was in the abuses in the papacy itself. Former popes had "heaped to themselves teachers, not as desiring to learn from them what their duties demanded, but rather to procure the declaration that those things were lawful towards which their desires led them." The pope claimed to own all benefices and merely sold what was his own, and hence the pope could not be guilty of simony. Everything was for sale. Anything could be obtained for money, however hurtful it might be to the welfare of the church. All the chief evils in the church could be traced to the system of money payments. Laws should not be dispensed with except for grave cause, and even then no money should be taken for the dispensation. "...this is the source Holy Father, from which, as from the Trojan horse, every abuse has broken forth into the church. The first thing needed is that the laws should be observed; and no dispensations should be granted, save on the ground of strict necessity. But still more important is it that the Vicar of Christ should never consider himself at liberty to use the power of the Keys for gain."

The report declared that the whole church was infected with corruption. Many glaring evils were connected with the clergy. Unfit persons were habitually ordained and admitted to benefices. Charges were made on the benefices that made it impossible for the holder to live an honest life. Reservations of offices had a demoralizing effect. Non-residency of both bishops and clergy led to neglect of duty and enabled men of scandalous lives to continue in their wickedness. Both regular and secular clergy frequently disgraced the church. Scandals were frequent in the monasteries. Unfit persons often heard confessions. Cardinals, bishops, and clergy were greedy for a plurality of benefices. Benefices should be bestowed for the good of the flock and not for the profit of the incumbent. Italians should not be appointed to foreign benefices and foreigners should not be appointed to Italian benefices. Cardinals should not hold bishoprics. The duty of the cardinal is to assist the pope in the government of the church. A bishop's duty is to feed his flock. To do this the bishop must live in the midst of his flock. Too many cardinals were absent from the Curia. Loose women were openly received into the houses of the Cardinals. Bishops should make sure that all preachers and confessors were men fit for their office. Nuncios and legates should not use their office for gain. No dispensation should be given for apostate monks and friars to give up their habit. Clerics should not be given dispensations to marry. No dispensation should be given clerics guilty of simony
by purchase of a benefice. A cleric given absolution for the offence should not be allowed to retain the benefice. Absolution for simony could be obtained for a mere song. The clergy must not be allowed by wills to alienate the goods of the church. An end must be put to abuses connected with confessional letters, portable altars, indulgences, commutation of vows, and alteration of wills. The scandalous abuses connected with grants by the authority of the pope should be ended.

Many abuses had to do with the oversight of the people. Sellers of indulgences should not be allowed to deceive the simple with their superstitions. No dispensation should be granted for a man to take a wife within the prohibited degrees of kinship. Many great evils had arisen from marriage dispensations. Unbelief was growing and unnecessary disputes over trivial points were disturbing the faith of the simple. The Mother and Mistress of all churches must amend these evils.

The report ended:

Finally, there are abuses affecting your Holiness as bishop of Rome itself—the slovenly and ignorant priests, even at St. Peter's; the prostitutes, walking the streets at midday, attended by clerics and members of Cardinals' households—the like of which is never seen in any other city. And provision should be made to put down private faction, and for the due care of almshouses, wards, and widows.

Such are the results, Holy Father, of our humble enquiries: and these are the things which, in our opinion, should be reformed.

It was a sharp and strong indictment, coming not from Protestants but from devout friends of the church. It revealed so many grave scandals in connection with the Holy See that it was decided not to publish the report. It was privately printed in Rome and a copy reached Germany. There it was republished with scoffing comments, as if no papal reform was seriously intended. To the Protestants a papal commission had justified all the German demands for the reform of the church.

The report did serve a useful purpose for the pope. As complaints mounted the pope was able to say that he had a committee studying the problem, and then he could say that the committee's report was being considered. It served as a valve to let off steam and to lower the pressure.

For the moment nothing came from the report. When the pope had appointed the commission he had also published a bull calling for a General Council to meet at Mantua in May, 1537. This was followed by a bull of reformation. The war between the Emperor and the king of France, Francis I, gave the pope an excuse to postpone the council. The appearance of reforming activity was maintained. Contarini, Caraffa, Aleander, and Badia were appointed to investigate the workings of the departments of the Curia which had most to do with the abuses detailed in the report—the Chancery, the Datary, and the Penitentiary. They presented their report in the fall of 1537, entitled Consilium quattuor delectorum at Paulo III. super reformatione sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae. The pope again summoned a General Council to meet on May 1, 1538, but again postponed it.

Contarini sensed that Pope Paul III's zeal for reform was waning and he tried to stir him up with his Epistola de potestate
Pontificis in usu clavius and in his De Potestate Pontificis in compositionibus. He urged the pope to use his powers for the good of the church and not for its destruction. The papacy should be a monarchy and not a tyranny. The pope should use his powers according to the light of reason. He should distinguish carefully between legitimate and illegitimate exercise of authority. The papacy had freely received and should freely give. Fees and extortions had become a scandal. The traffic in sacred things was a terrible canker destroying the spiritual life of the church.

In November, 1538, Contarini travelled with the pope to Ostia. He wrote Pole that they sat side by side discussing his treatises. The pope had revived his hopes when he was about ready to despair.

Sarpi, the Protestant historian, accused the pope of taking up just enough reform projects to prove that a Council was not necessary. It should be remembered that the pope was an old man and that he had never been a zealot. His overmastering idea was to take care of the interests of his family, to preserve his own comfort and dignity and that of the Holy See—he was unwilling to risk these on any scheme of reform.

The report of the commission did lead to further reforming commissions and helped pave the way for the colloquies that followed in the early 1540's. It ultimately bore fruit in the reforms at the Council of Trent.

THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS AND THE COUNTER-REFORMATION

One important sign of revival in the Roman church was the revivifying and reformation of some of the existing orders in the church and the rise of new orders whose purpose was the regeneration of Catholicism. Some began to appear about the time of the rise of the Oratory of Divine Love and were a spontaneous expression of the desire to make the Catholic religion once more a reality. Some were fruits of the new spirit spreading from the Oratory of Divine Love.

THE CAMALDOLESE:

In 1522 a Venetian noble, Paolo Guustiniani, initiated a revival of the Camaldolese. This order began as a reform of the Benedictines in 1012 by St. Romuald. In 1027 his friend Count Maldolus presented to him a site called Camoldoli in the Appenines about thirty miles east of Florence. The order began as an order of hermits but developed into a community. Paolo Guustiniani began as a hermit at Pascalupi in the Appenines. He moved to Massaccio. Caraffa recommended him to Pope Adrian VI who granted him privileges to lead the order and gave him a church. After his death in 1528 the Order was led by Guustiniani of Bergamo and established itself at Monte Corona, near Perugia. The order spread throughout Southern Europe emphasizing a strict ascetic life of holiness.

THEATINNES:

More influential was a new order dedicated to the reform of the secular clergy. Gaetano di Tien (1480-1547) originated the idea of this order. He had been a Protonotary Apostolic under Julius II. He resigned his lucrative post at the papal court to carry the spirit of the Oratory of Divine Love to his native city in 1518. In 1519 he planted it in Verona and in Venice, 1521-1523. He believed that the principal cause of decadence in religion was the degradation of the secular clergy. He hoped to remedy this by forming a community of secular priests who would be Clerks Regular, living together under
vows but conducting worship and ministering to the people like ordinary priests. In 1523 he returned to Rome where he met Caraffa and persuaded him to join him in the establishing of the order. Pope Clement VII confirmed the Order on June 29, 1524. Caraffa who was Bishop of Chieti (1505-24) and Archbishop of Brindisi (1518-24) resigned his two sees and became the head of the order. It was named "Theatines" after Chieti (the Latin name for Chieti was Theate), the see of Caraffa. In 1525 they established themselves on the Monte Pincio. The members wore the cassock and biretta of an ordinary priest. They took the vows of the monks (poverty, holiness, and obedience) and took as their goals the reformation of the clergy and lives of contemplation. Since they were forbidden to beg alms only the rich nobles could afford to join them. The order became a nursery for bishops. They would serve as a model for the Jesuits. Their numbers remained small. Their main sphere of action was Italy but they spread into Spain, Portugal, Poland, Bavaria and France. Thomas Goldwell, a friend of Cardinal Pole and Bishop of St. Asaph (1555-9) became their superior at Naples, 1561. He would be the only English bishop at the Council of Trent and the last survivor of the Marian hierarchy. From the Theatines came the learned liturgiologist Cardinal Tommasi (1649-1713) and Lorenzo Scupoli (1530-1610) author of the influential work, The Spiritual Combat. The Theatines exercised a great influence on other orders.

THE SOMASCHI:

The order owed its name to the village of Somasca, near Bergamo, where in 1528, a Venetian nobleman, Girolamo Miani (1481-1537), appalled by the misery following the wars in Italy, consecrated himself to the care of waifs and strays. He gathered companions to help him. In Northern Italy they established hospitals in Venice, Verona, Como, and Milan. Paul III confirmed the association on July 5, 1540. Pius V raised it to an Order in 1568. They spread over Italy and into France.

THE CAPUCHINS:

The Capuchin Order was an attempt to reform the Franciscans. In 1525 a Friar Observant, Matteo da Bassio, led a return to the simple rules of St. Francis. He received approval from Clement VII on July 3, 1528 for his order. He and his followers established themselves near Camerino. They met strong opposition from the jealousy of the Observants. They found an able champion and protectoress in Vittoria Colonna, Duchess of Amalfi and wife of the Marquis of Pescara, the vicar of Pavia, in 1525. Paul III confirmed their privileges on August 25, 1536. They served with great unselfishness and devotion during the plague of 1528-29. The Roman Church probably owed more to them than to any other order for keeping the mass of the Italian people in her fold. They were simple and superstitious but appealed to the people. They gained a reputation as exorcists but have been accused of vulgarising religion. Their preachers lacked refinement. Their third Vicar-General, Bernardino Ochino (1487-1564) was the most popular preacher of his day. He became infected with reforming doctrines and deserted his order and the Roman church and joined the Protestants. He fled to Geneva in 1542. He worked in Augsburg in 1545 and in Basel in 1547. In 1548 Cranmer made him a prebendary of Canterbury. Under Mary he fled to Basel and then became a preacher at Zurich. In 1563 he was expelled as a Unitarian and fled to Poland. He was banished from Poland in 1564 and died the same year in Moravia.
His defection was a severe blow to the order. The pope considered disbanding the Order. The Capuchins survived by avoiding theological controversy and devoting themselves to serving the poor. They received their name from their pointed hoods (capuce). The Order spread over Europe.

THE BARNABITES:
In 1532 three Italian nobles, Antonio Maria Zaccaria, a physician; Bartolommeo Ferrari, a lawyer; and Giacomo Antonio Morigia, a mathematician, founded the Barnabites, an Order that took its name from the Church of St. Barnabas in Milan that was given to them. They were approved by Clement VII on February 18, 1533, as Clerks Regular of St. Paul. They were also called Paulines. They took Paul as their model and emphasized the study of Paul's epistles. They devoted themselves to the instruction of the young and the cure of souls. They made use of open-air missions. They took the customary vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They promised not to seek any office. They catechized and heard confessions. They worked to bring a revival of zeal for souls among the clergy. They spread throughout Italy and into France, Austria and Belgium. One of their more famous members was the liturgiologist, Bartolommeo Gavanti, who became General of the Order.

CAPUCINES:
In 1538 Maria Laurentia Longo instituted the Capucines at Naples, an order for women modeled after the Poor Clares of St. Francis.

URSULINES:
The most important of the orders for women was the Ursulines, founded in 1535 by Angela Merici (1474-1540) of Brescia, for the care of the sick and for teaching young girls. It was the first teaching order of women established in the Church. Angela Merici, a deeply religious person from childhood, at the age of twenty believed that the great need of her time was better instruction in the faith for girls. She turned her home in Desenzano into a school. Later she moved to Brescia. Her girls lived in their homes but assembled for conferences and prayer. In 1535 twelve of them formed a community named for St. Ursula. A constitution was adopted in 1540. The pope gave his approval for an Order in 1544. The movement spread rapidly throughout Italy and into Germany and France.

JESUITS:
The most important of the reforming Orders was the Jesuits who became the right arm of Counter-Reformation and Roman Revival.