

Today we celebrate the Memorial of Pope St. Pius X, who was born in 1835 and died in 1914. He was Pope for 11 years, and was the first Pope in 342 years to be canonized a saint. He was beatified in 1951, and canonized in 1954.

One of the first things he did was to reform music in the liturgy with a *Motu Proprio* in 1903. There was a tendency to impose the popular music of the day into liturgies ... in the form of what we might call “oom-pah” ... or local town bands. He insisted that music be sacred in nature and that it be consistent with the Church’s musical tradition.

He also lowered the age of First Communion from the 12 to 7 ... but left it to a future generation to determine what to do with Confirmation ... which in our own diocese precedes First Communion, while in others remains around age 12. So, more than 100 years later, we’re still trying to figure out what to do with Confirmation.

He opposed the idea of an “evolution” of Doctrine - that is, that Church Teaching could change from one thing to another ... while leaving open the idea of what is called the “Development of Doctrine” where teachings can develop so long as there is no reversal of ideas.

In 1908, he issued a Universal Catechism for use throughout the entire world. He also began the codification of Canon Law, which was promulgated by his successor 4 years after his death.

Also, in 1908, he recognized the Church in the United States as having grown beyond being a mere missionary Church, and established 15 new dioceses in the US and appointed 2 American Cardinals.

Aside from the miracles performed following his death, a paralyzed child who was placed in his arms began to move, and ran around the room; as well as a Cardinal with tuberculosis was cured after a papal audience.

He stood up to governments which sought to compromise the status of the Church in Europe; and similar to our own Pope Francis, he wore a simple cross from the day of his election, cut back on certain ceremonies, stopped the custom of the Pope dining alone (inviting his friends to dine with him), and did not elevate his own peasant sisters to the rank of countess, saying “I have made them sisters of the Pope, what more can I do?” His motto as Pope was to “renew all things in Christ” ... through Mary.

He also had a great love for children, and would gather children around him during Papal Audiences and talk with them, his weekly catechism lessons always had a special place for children, and he established the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in every parish (we know it as CCD) to assist in the Christian education of children.

If we can learn anything from the life of Pope St. Pius X, it might perhaps be that “The more things change, the more they stay the same.” Let us pray that our own Holy Father ... and may all priests and bishops be good pastors and shepherds of the Church ... working tirelessly to renew the Faith in current times, while striving to live as Christ would have them live ... to Jesus, through Mary.