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 Contrary to what Voltaire said, the Holy Roman Empire *was* holy. To show this, Gary Potter gives us a quick rundown on its history from Constantine the Great to the recently beatified Karl von Habsburg.

Catholic Wisdom Page 24
 Bite-sized portions of pious food for thought.

Catholic Teaching Concerning a “Just War” Page 25
 Brother Lawrence Mary, M.I.C.M., Tert. resumes the Catholic just war doctrine. Catholics are neither pacifists on the one hand nor war-hawks on the other. This is an excellent primer on how to avoid those extremes.

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Cover: *Forest Rest* by an unknown artist. **Center:** Detail of *The Adoration of the Kings* by Jan (Mabuse) Gossaert (c.1478-1532). This is thought to have been the altarpiece of the Lady Chapel of Saint Adrian’s Monastery in Grammont (near Brussels, Belgium). Design on both paintings by M.I.C.M. sisters.

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HOLY AND ROMAN

By Gary Potter

Voltaire, whose corrosive wit did so much to dissolve the faith of the pre-revolutionary French aristocracy in their right to rule (not to speak of their adherence to the Faith) once quipped that “the Holy Roman Empire is neither holy nor Roman.” To those who heard the remark at the time, it would have had a special edge since the Queen of France, Marie Antoinette, was born a daughter of one ruler of the Empire, Empress Maria Teresa, and was the sister of another, Emperor Joseph II. Like numerous other of Voltaire’s remarks — another example: “I think you are wrong but will defend unto death your right to speak as you do” — this one has ever since been parroted by the mediocre, ignorant of its provenance, who repeat it wishing to impress others, as if it were original with them.

It was his malicious flippancy that made Voltaire one of the great celebrities of his day, but was there any truth to what he said? Was the Holy Roman Empire neither holy nor Roman? As far as that goes, what *was* the Holy Roman Empire?

Strictly speaking, its history must be dated from Christmas, 800 A.D., when a king of the Franks, Charlemagne, was crowned Emperor of the Romans by Pope Leo III. This was at St. Peter’s in Rome. (It was also on Christmas Day, in 496, that Clovis, King of the Franks, with two thousand of his warriors, was baptized in Rheims by St. Remigius.) However, no event in history takes place without being preceded by others. For instance, in our own history as a liberal republic, something as important (in social as well as political terms) as the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 did not simply happen all of a sudden. It was preceded by, and may even be seen as part of, the long aftermath of the War Between the States that had ended a century before.

In the same way, and even though Charlemagne reacted as if it had been totally unexpected, the event of Christmas 800 did not happen all of a sudden; the Holy Roman Empire did not arise from nothing. Its roots could not be more ancient. They reached back to 476, to the brief reign of Romulus Augustus, the last Emperor of the Roman Empire in the West; past him to 323 when Constantine the Great, the first Christian Emperor, became sole ruler of the Empire after sharing its government with others; past him to 27 B.C. when Augustus, nephew of Julius Caesar, became the first Emperor of the Romans; and even beyond that to the Jewish theocracies of which we read in the Old Testament. There was also a period, from 476 to 797, in the