

## Another 'snippet' of History - The Donation of Constantine

*Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

One of the most interesting and significant things to see if given the chance to visit Paris, France, is the crypt of the Basilica of Saint-Denis. Not only is the basilica one of the oldest (groundbreaking in 1135AD) and one of the first true 'gothic' cathedrals, and not only does it hold the historical significance of the place of the coronation of the queens of France for hundreds of years (so that they did not have to travel all the way to Reims, where the kings were coronated), but it became the necropolis containing the tombs of the kings and queens of France, including nearly every king from the 10th century to Louis XVIII in the 19th century, including the remains of Charles 'The Hammer' Martel and his son Pepin the Short, the father of Charlemagne. In that crypt, they all lay in pious Catholic repose.

Irony has it that not only these kings of France but others throughout Europe were greatly influenced by documents called the Donation of Constantine and the Isidorian Decretals that purported to have validated the claim that the powers and possessions of Constantine were bestowed to the pope, and further aided in the conversion of these kings to Catholicism.

In his 'Divine Comedy,' written in the early 14th century, the poet Dante Alighieri referred to the Donation of Constantine in "*Inferno*", canto 19, lines 115–117:

*Ahi, Costantin, di quanto mal fu matre,  
non la tua conversion, ma quella dote  
che da te prese il primo ricco patre!*

(Ah, Constantine, how much evil was born,  
not from your conversion, but from that donation  
that the first wealthy pope received from you!)

But, in the latter part of the 1500s and early 1600s, these documents were discovered to be fraudulent.

As Christians, we must keep in mind that the end does not justify the means.

*2 Timothy 2:4-7, 4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. 5 And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. 6 The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. 7 Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.*

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