

Month of the Holy Family.

AMONG the special devotions which have taken a firm grasp on the religious sentiments of the Catholic world, in the closing years of our century, none holds a more conspicuous place than that known as the Confraternity of the Holy Family. Though scarce five decades of years have elapsed since its establishment it has spread over the continent of Europe, enveloped the British Isles and established a lasting foothold in America. The aphorism God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, if not true in the narrowest sense of the word, is accurate and expressive in a wider signification. God always provides a means for the end. He ever finds an instrument for His work. Such an instrument is the Confraternity of the Holy Family, and the work awaiting it is the reorganization of society through the family. Ever since Luther raised to the world the banner of revolt the cohesion of society has been loosening and crumbling away. He arrayed himself against ecclesiastical authority; a short step further, his adherents found themselves in contact with civil power; and from this point the incline was easy to the negation of parental authority. This triple negation we find embodied in that curse of our day—that monster, anarchy, the legitimate, uncouth offspring of the much-glorified reformation. He who would undertake the task of reconstituting society on a solid basis must begin by remodelling the family. Society is but an aggregation of separate families, as the stately structure is a harmonious combination of bricks and stones. If, therefore, individual families, which are the elements of society, be properly constituted and fashioned, if the authority residing in the parents be exercised with moderation and prudence, if obedience be prompt and cheerful, and not forced and churlish, if honesty and morality and unselfishness and religion dominate and direct the whole family, we may look to see the social fabric rise a graceful and harmonious structure. While elegant and stately, it will not sacrifice solidity for mere adornment, nor will it permit in any one portion undue weight or expansion to endanger or weaken the whole. It will be the ideal edifice outlined by our Lord, secure alike against flood and tempest: "And the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house and it fell not."—Matt. vii., 25.

We are told that object lessons are an efficient means of teaching truth. If so it will be readily admitted that the example of the model family—the Holy Family of Nazareth—must operate powerfully in forming families to be the safeguard of society. If it is at times difficult to obey, it is even more difficult to use authority justly. We cannot close our eyes to the fact that the abuse of authority has been the prolific parent of revolt—

"Man, proud, men dressed in little brief authority
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As makes the angels weep."

Christ was forced to reprove the doctors of the law for imposing upon others intolerable burdens which they themselves would not touch with one of their fingers. Judas, too, used his position of trust to gratify his avarice. In civil administration men scarcely look for disinterestedness; they have almost come to believe that the legislator must be watched if he is to be kept honest; and although the admission pains us we think there is reason for the belief, for instances are all too numerous of politicians who make their position of trust subservient to their own personal ends. Small cause for wonder, then, if the erstwhile trusting elector, suddenly finding himself the dupe of villany, soon outstrips his master in the race of dishonesty, barters the franchise—man's birth-right—for personal gain, and ends by feigning to regard his fellow-man the knave he himself has turned out to be.

This disease in the higher branches is not local. The sap that nourished it has been drawn from a diseased root. The corrupt law-maker carried with him from the family nursery the germs of disease which in public life festered and spread infection around about him. The evil, then, to be remedied must be treated first in the family. This appears to have presented itself to the founders of the Confraternity of the Holy Family with the force that brings conviction, as the following, taken from the Manual of the Confraternity, fully shows:

"It differs from other associations in not having been instituted for any one member of the family, taken separately; its graces are equally distributed to all who belong to it—to the son as well as the father; to the daughter as well as the mother; and although its special predilection may be for those who bear the greatest resemblance to the holy house of Nazareth, it denies admission to none, and all may share its benefits.

"Oh! that we might enter the homes of the many unhappy families which exist and persuade them to seek at the true source the wealth which they are so eager to obtain. In placing themselves under the protection of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, what would soon be the result? These unfortunate households would be changed so by a miracle. The married would learn to imitate Mary and Joseph in their mutual relations, by a renewed fidelity and forbearance: parents would imitate Mary and Joseph in their relation to Jesus, by giving solid instruction, pious education to their children, in watching the companions they frequent, in preaching to them more by example than by words; children would imitate Jesus in His conduct towards Mary and Joseph, by the respectful affection, cheerful obedience and filial help they would render their parents. Under this triple patronage families would soon be transferred into so many sanctuaries of Nazareth. The incense of prayer would constantly ascend to heaven, and this prayer would draw down upon them heaven's choicest blessings, and procure the unspeakable sweetness of union and peace."

With the gradual diffusion among individuals of so many virtues, who can doubt that society itself would soon put on a changed appearance? Egotism, exposed in all its hideousness by the inculcation and practice of the beautiful virtue of charity, would be forever dissipated, religious indifference could find no place in lives fashioned after the sacred models of Nazareth, and feverish restlessness and discontent would give place to a resigned confidence in Almighty God and a cheerful acceptance of what ever lot Providence should see fit to mete out to us.