

FATHER HOGAN'S SERMON.

Following is the sermon preached in St. Patrick's Church on Sunday, Dec. 3rd, by the Rev. Father Hogan, C.S.S.R.

Take unto you the armour of God, that ye may be able to resist in this evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Eph. vi. 11.

DEARLY BELIEVED CHRISTIANS, By Baptism we died to sin and rose to the life of grace. We received a new birth, and became new creatures. It made us children of God and of the Church. But how weak and frail is the life of an infant! How little is required to take it out of life again! If this be true in regard to the bodily life, how much more true is it in regard to the spiritual life. As the child advances, the dangers multiply. He is a stranger case without experience upon the perilous ways of the world. At this crisis religion does not forget her child, she has reinforcements in reserve, for the Sacrament of Confirmation steps in, seals up the grace of our Baptism, fills us with one grace we need above all all others—the gift of fortitude—tries to be beforehand with the world, and enrolls us in the actual militia of God, so that, in addition to our former character of His Love, we have now the former character of being His soldiers.

Soldiers, indeed, in the true sense of the word; for "The life of man upon earth is a warfare, so sacred Scripture tells us; and, from his cradle to his grave he is exposed to the attacks of a terrible enemy. Our life is like the march of an army through an enemy's country—there can be no peace, and there is not a moment's security except in watchfulness. If the soldiers stand to their arms, and are on their guard night and day—they may go on unharmed, but a moment's false security may be your destruction. It is a battle, moreover, in which we must be victorious. *Val victis*—Woe to the conquered. It is a miserable thing to be overcome in an earthly battle, and those who are defeated meet but little sympathy, but in this conflict the woe and misery are infinitely greater. Yes, my dear brethren, we must conquer, and, therefore, we must not fail to put on the armour of God."

A soldier cannot fight without his arms, and in this warfare our arms must be the "armour of God." Nothing of our own—no natural qualities that we can bring are of any avail to withstand such an enemy as we have to fight against; and no merely human armour is able "to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one." Mere natural courage will not help us, and, indeed, we constantly find that some of those who are the bravest in temporal matters are the weakest and most cowardly in spiritual things.

The Sacrament of Confirmation has been instituted by our Lord to furnish us with all the arms needed in Christian warfare, and formally to enroll us among His soldiers. In this Sacrament the Holy Spirit descends upon us and consecrates us by the infusion of His grace, and so marks us out forever as the soldiers of Christ by a special character, and supplies us with the strength to fight our Lord's battles bravely and successfully.

Oh! I believe that Confirmation is a Sacrament which makes us strong and perfect Christians—which impresses upon the soul an indelible mark which is never to be effaced; but I cannot bring myself to believe that Confirmation is necessary for salvation. No one asks you to believe it. Though this Sacrament is not so absolutely necessary that a person may not be saved without receiving it—though it is not so necessary for all men as Baptism, nor so necessary as Penance for those who have sinned, still, can we, without committing a grievous sin through negligence, omit receiving a Sacrament by which God

pours out upon us His most precious gifts and abundant graces? On the contrary, what eagerness to receive this Sacrament should not Christians display and how careful you ought to be, Christian parents, to make your children receive it. There is a question of making them grow in grace and of rendering them perfect, if you fail in this duty you are guilty before God.

Oh my friends, your children, in growing up to man and woman's estate, will have need of courage and of strength. Now, this need is supplied by means of that special grace which they receive in the Sacrament of Confirmation. This Sacrament gives them a real right to the actual graces which they require in the time of need, in that hour of duty which is the hour of difficulty, in that moment when they are bound to confess their faith, and when, in the confession of that faith, they have to take up their Cross and bear it after Jesus and suffer for His sake.

This suffering may come to them in many ways. Thousands of men and women in all ages have been called upon to seal their testimony to their faith with their blood. Thousands more have had to suffer loss of worldly goods, and have been stripped of their possessions and reduced from riches to want. Others have been deprived of liberty, and left to wear their lives away in loathsome and lonely dungeons. But besides those who have lost goods and liberty and life itself by reason of their confession of the Christian faith—the martyrs and confessors of the Catholic Church—there are thousands more who, in our own day, as in all ages, have had to suffer for its sake. Theirs have been real trials, although they stopped short of imprisonment and death. There are the trials of civil and social and domestic ostracism, wounding of the hearts of parents, the forfeiture of life-long friendships, the rending of still more tender ties, loss of fortune and expectations, and sometimes even of the means of livelihood—loss of place and influence and the esteem of others, and being regarded as a fool for Christ's sake. To men and women, not a few in our own day, and in our own land, profession of the Catholic faith has proved a very nailing of themselves to the Cross of Christ. It is objected to the Catholic religion by those who are outside the Catholic Church, that it introduces discord into families; that it comes between husband and wife and parent and child, and interferes with temporal prosperity in a way that no other religion does. The impeachment is a valid one. Jesus foretold that so it should be. But it is an impeachment of Jesus Christ Himself. That the world proposes as an objection to the Catholic—Roman Church is one of the very marks and signs that it, and it alone, is the one true church of the crucified Christ. In this, as in so much else, she stands single and apart. Man may pass at will from sect to sect, and take up one non-Catholic religion after another, and it does not affect their position or their prospects in the world. The world cares not. But let a man make his submission to the one Catholic and Roman Church of God, and on the instant he is at enmity with the world that lies outside it. The world is up in arms. There is a clamor, and condemnation, opposition and resentment, and in one form or another he has to bear the Cross after Christ. It is the world's unwilling testimony to the divinity of that Church of Jesus Christ.

Again there is the world's sneer, and to some men it is harder to bear than is the world's frown. Some who stand stalwart in face of the fiery hail of persecution shrink shivering from the chill rain of ridicule.

To surmount these difficulties which surround man's duty with regard to

his faith—to succour Christian men and women when thus imperilled, there is bestowed a special grace by means of the Sacrament of Confirmation. That Sacrament confers an increase of faith and fortitude, of courage and strength to profess the faith—to suffer for the faith—and to hold fast to the faith.

It may be that before you received Confirmation you had to fight the good fight of faith, fought it valiantly and kept the faith. If so, it was certainly with divine aid. But between your spiritual condition before Confirmation and your spiritual condition after Confirmation there is a difference. In Baptism, it is true, we received many graces but by the grace of Confirmation we make the best use of all the graces received in Baptism, in our battle with the temptations and dangers of the world. Baptism kindles in us the light of faith; Confirmation increased that holy fire and swells it into a mighty flame, never to be extinguished, but always sending forth rays of its glorious light into the world. Baptism makes us Christians; Confirmation strengthens us to fulfil our duties as such. By Baptism we became members—tender and weak members—of the body of our Lord. Confirmation changes the weaklings into Christian heroes, ready to defend the faith with their blood. Baptism plants the germ of a higher life in us; Confirmation makes it grow stronger. By Baptism we are regenerated and made children of God; by Confirmation we grow into perfect men and soldiers of Christ. In a word, Confirmation brings to its perfection the special work which was begun in Baptism.

But is this all that this Holy Sacrament does for us? Oh no! beloved Christians. What belongs peculiarly to Confirmation is, that it imparts to us the plenitude of the Holy Ghost. This Divine Spirit comes to renew in our souls the wonderful effects which He wrought when, on the day of Pentecost, He descended upon the Apostles. He comes to pour into us His sevenfold stream of graces, His seven gifts, so that we may not only profess the faith fearlessly, but manifest by its practice that our lives are stamped with its impress.

Besides all these graces Confirmation imprints on the soul an indelible mark. This character is the sign-manuel of God, graven with the finger of God upon the soul. This permanent character is the perennial well-spring of spiritual strength to the soldier of Jesus Christ. With this royal signet of the Holy Ghost emblazoned on his soul he knows that he is fighting, not unarmed and not in his own strength, but in the armor of God and with the strength of the Holy Ghost.

And now, my dear brethren you may ask, what is the use of dwelling so much upon this Sacrament, which most of you have already received? It is a long time since you were confirmed—the Bishop whose hands were imposed on you is long since dead. Those who knelt beside you are, perhaps, most of them gone, and the day itself has become but a faint memory. Yes, but the mark, the character of Confirmation which the fires of the Holy Ghost impressed upon your soul is still there, and neither time nor eternity can make it fade. Even should you prove unfaithful to your Divine Captain, He can never erase the seal confirmed upon you in Confirmation. In the wild fury of the tempestuous fires of hell, the same character will glow terribly. It is indestructible even there—yea, there it will be a fountain of special agony forever and forever.

On the day of your Confirmation you took upon you the character of the soldier of Christ, as a soldier of Christ you will have to be judged.

You have been a soldier of Christ—what sort of a soldier? Have you

been loyal to your King and Captain? We know what earthly loyalty is, and what great things men will do and suffer for their King or their cause. Have you shown the same loyalty for your Heavenly Leader? Have you had His interests at heart? Has His honor ever been to you like your own honor? Have you always stood up manfully for His cause, or have you betrayed it? The day will come, my dear brethren, when these will be terrible questions for us all—"He who denies Me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God."

Let us, then, fight, my dear brethren, as good soldiers of Christ, and, if we have to suffer something for our own faith and loyalty, let us always think of the words of the Apostle: "You have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin" and remember that our crown will be in proportion to our fidelity.

Therefore, let us awaken in our souls the graces received in Confirmation, that, as true soldiers of Christ, we may not be overcome in the fierce conflict with heresy and infidelity, but be able to say at last with St. Paul: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, as to the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day. Amen."

A Priest on the Midway

Rev. J. T. Foley, of this city, says the St. Louis Dispatch, who was stopping in Chicago during the Fair, and had a curious experience in the Midway Pleasure. It was nothing less than a call for the exercise of his sacerdotal functions in behalf of the South Sea Islanders. One evening Father Foley stood at the entrance to the theater in which natives of the Samoan Islands were the performers. He was strongly of the opinion that the alleged Samoans were disguised mulattoes, born and bred in the United States. But several of them bowed to Father Foley, and he asked them how they knew that he was a priest. Because we are Catholics they answered in excusable English.

Father Foley mingled with the troop and learned that twenty of the forty tragedians had been converted from paganism to Catholicity by French missionaries. H. J. Moore, a resident of Apia, Samoa, who is the manager of the theater, gave Father Foley the freedom of the place, and the St. Louis priest called whenever he went to the Fair. One day a huge grey-bearded chief threw his arms around Father Foley's neck and said that he was anxious to make a confession of his wrong doings. It was not the hour for the performance, and Father Foley went to a dark recess of the stage where the thewarthy islanders were duly shrived. The Samoans wanted Father Foley to say Mass for them, but on account of some hitch, permission would not be granted to priests by the Chicago clerical authorities to say Mass in the World's Fair, and Father Foley could not comply with the request.

When Archbishop Keen was in Chicago Father Foley and Father McCabe took him to the South Sea Islanders' theater. The troop were in the midst of their performances when the Bishop entered but the barbarians ceased to play, and coming up to the prelate, singly they sank on one knee and kissed his episcopal ring. Father Foley was much edified, because he did not think that the same number of civilized Catholics would know what to do under the circumstances.

"When your heart is bad, and your head is bad, and you are bad clean through, what is needed?" asked a Sunday-school teacher of her class. "I know—Ayer's Sarsaparilla," spoke up a little girl, whose mother had recently been restored to health by that medicine.