

Northwest Review

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SATURDAY, SEPT. 24, 1904.

Calendar for Next Week.

SEPTEMBER.

- 25—Eighteenth Sunday after Pen-
tecost. Anticipated solemnity
of Michaelmas.
26—Monday—Votive office of the
Holy Angels.
27—Tuesday—Saints Cosmas and
Damian, Martyrs.
28—Wednesday—St. Wenceslaus,
Martyr.
29—Thursday—St. Michael the
Archangel, Michaelmas.
30—Friday—St. Jerome, Confessor,
Doctor.

OCTOBER.

- 1—Saturday—St. Remigius, Bishop.

THE TRADITIONAL BELIEF IN THE IMMACULATE CON- CEPTION.

In this jubilee year of the procla-
mation of Our Lady's Immaculate
Conception it is well to consider
the traditional growth of this be-
lief. It is one of the best examples
of a truth held from the very be-
ginning, then discussed and dis-
puted by many theologians, and
finally explicitly declared as belong-
ing to the deposit of faith.

Let us first refresh our memories
as to what it means. Most Protes-
tants, however honest in their in-
quiries, do not really understand
what the term, Immaculate Con-
ception, means. Nay, many Catho-
lics, well informed in other matters
and holding implicitly all Catholic
doctrines, misunderstand this one.
Immaculate Conception, then, as
applied to the Blessed Virgin, does
not mean that there was anything
miraculous in the manner of her
conception, as there undoubtedly
was in her Son's case. It does not
mean that she was conceived and
born of a virgin. Nor does it imply
that her parents were sinless. What
it means is simply this—that her
soul, when joined to her body as it
developed in her mother's womb,
was free from original sin and
clothed with sanctifying grace. All
other children of Adam, conceived
and born in the natural way, re-
ceive, from the Creator Himself, a
soul that is deprived of sanctifying
grace and therefore is in the state
of original sin. This unfortunate
condition, which prevents them
from being children of God, can be
removed only by baptism or the
implicit desire thereof. But in
Mary's case the soul, redeemed
beforehand by the foreseen merits
of her Son, was, in the first mo-
ment of her human existence, freed
from the least touch or stain of
Adam's primal sin. There was,
therefore, to quote the words of
Father Aloysius Brosnan, S.J., in
the July "Messenger," "no instant
in which her soul was shorn of
sanctifying grace or the splendid
energies of the higher life. She lost
not any one of them by reason of
Adam's sin; there was no instant
in which her beautiful soul was at
enmity with God, and so captive
to the powers of darkness, or at
all the object of his hate or dis-
pleasure; there was no instant in
her existence when her soul was
not caught up in God's dearest
love, pure, unsullied, immaculate,
the child of His adoption, and
crowned with every grace or
adornment that befitted her superb
dignity, Mother of the Christ to be."

Now this belief, not indeed ex-
pressed with that theological pre-
cision which later discussions

evolved, but really and substan-
tially the same, was held from
apostolic times and belongs to
Catholic tradition. The early
Fathers and the earliest liturgical
monuments set forth the unrivalled
purity of Mary and her freedom
from all stain in words that neces-
sarily imply absolute freedom from
original sin at every instant of her
being. In the acts of St. Andrew
the Apostle, largely received as
genuine by modern scholarship, we
read: "Forasmuch as the first man
was created out of earth before it
was cursed, so was it necessary
that the perfect man, the Son of
God, should be born of a virgin
never accursed." The liturgies of
St. James and St. Mark, of un-
doubted antiquity, make mention
of the Immaculate Conception;
Irenaeus and Tertullian are quoted
from the second century; Hippoly-
tus and Origen from the third. This
last named, placing the Virgin
Mother in contrast with Eve, de-
clares that "she was not deceived
by the serpent's blandishments,
nor infected by his poisonous
breath." Ephrem and Ambrose,
Jerome and Chrysostom declare
her absolute sinlessness; Augustine,
in the fifth, will not have sin men-
tioned with her. And so down the
glorious line, till Cyril of Alexan-
dria, in the council of Ephesus
(431) holds the sacred truth beyond
question. "Whoever heard," he ex-
claims, "that an architect, building
for himself a home, should first
yield it up to possession and occu-
pation by his enemy?"

This general consensus of opinion
continued down to the twelfth cen-
tury, when a letter attributed to
St. Bernard, that most devout
client of Mary, gave rise to a con-
troversy that raged among Catho-
lic theologians for five or six cen-
turies. That letter was directed
not so much against the Immacu-
late Conception as against the in-
troduction of its feast without
authority from Rome; but the
reasons alleged against the feast
seem at times to touch the doc-
trine itself. In the following cen-
tury, the thirteenth, St. Thomas
Aquinas seems to favor rather the
negative opinion that was preva-
lent in his day. His followers,
especially the members of his own
order, the Dominicans, took up
what they supposed to be the
teachings of their great master and
taught that the Blessed Mother
was not immaculate in her concep-
tion. The Franciscans, on the other
hand, quite generally defended the
Immaculate Conception, and it is
due to the great Franciscan, Duns
Scotus (1305) that from his time
the true and traditional doctrine
prevailed more and more. Two
hundred and fifty years later the
members of the Society of Jesus,
to a man, took up the defence of
the Immaculate Conception so ef-
fectively that a hundred years be-
fore the definition in 1854 hardly a
dissentient voice was heard.

The whole controversy was pec-
uliar in this respect that the dis-
putants on both sides were tenderly
devoted to the Blessed Virgin and
that both sides admitted the very
principles that were to prevail in
the solution of this question,
namely, the fitness of this great
prerogative for the Mother of God,
and the consequent necessity of
granting it to her if the Scrip-
tures and the Fathers sanctioned
this concession. But there was a
certain timidity in applying these
principles to this particular case—
Mary's exemption from original sin
—a timidity worthy of all respect,
so long as the Church had not
spoken her mind. The arguments
for and against the Immaculate
Conception can be found fully
stated in Father Aloysius Brosnan's
three articles in the "Messen-
ger" for July, August and Septem-
ber, from which we have borrowed
freely, and which we commend to
the attentive perusal of those of
our readers who wish to study this
interesting question thoroughly.

The point we insist upon especial-
ly here is the constant preference
of the Catholic laity, even when
theologians were most divided, for
the doctrine that ultimately pre-
vailed. A striking proof of this
preference is related in the life of
St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, the holy
lay brother of the Society of Jesus.
It happened at Palma, the capital
of Majorca, an island off the east
coast of Spain, in the early part
of the seventeenth century, more than

two hundred years before the
proclamation of the dogma of the
Immaculate Conception.

The last embers of another long
and heated controversy among
Catholic theologians were still
smouldering. Paul V. had, it is
true, somewhat cooled the ardor of
the disputants. However, in the
Franciscan friary and the Jesuit
college there had been public dis-
cussions on the burning question,
how to harmonize the claims of
human liberty with Divine fore-
knowledge and the economy of
grace. The members of another
religious order wished publicly to
maintain their own views, as they
had a right to do. Unfortunately,
among the theses posted up on the
walls, one had slipped in that was
unfavorable to the Immaculate
Conception of Mary. Great was
the astonishment of the Majorcans
on reading this hateful proposition,
they who venerated the Blessed
Virgin under that very title of the
Immaculate Conception as the
patroness of their capital city. In-
tense excitement throughout Pal-
ma. The civic authorities decide
that the only way to allay the
irritation of the people is to cele-
brate a great festival in honor of
Mary Immaculate. The city coun-
cil appeal to the viceroy, Don
Charles Coloma, who sends for the
prior and the master of theology of
that unwise convent and orders
them to suppress the objectionable
thesis. The viceroy threatens that
he will revive an ancient decree,
inflicting the penalty of banishment
on whosoever dared to attack the
doctrine of the Immaculate Con-
ception of Mary. The two religions
chose to resist the royal injunction.
Next morning the placards were
defaced and crossed out, and as the
popular indignation waxed stronger
the Fathers were officially informed
that they must either withdraw
their thesis or leave the city. They
adopted the former alternative.
Then followed a whole week of pub-
lic rejoicing, processions, solemn
religious functions, musical enter-
tainments, all in honor of Mary
Immaculate.

THE VIRGIN CHOIR.

"They follow the Lamb whither-
soever he goeth." Apoc. xiv., 4.

When this wondrous world shall
gleam,
In the first unfading beam,
Bright herald of Eternity;
And the glance of God's own face,
Lighting every darksome place,
Shall brood upon the sleeping sea,
Mixing low earth with highest
heaven;
Oh, be my soul in mercy driven,
Nearer yet and yet more near,
Lost in Love, that conquers Fear,
Whither sit the chosen Choir,
Harping on their chords of fire,
In an everlasting psalm,
All the praises of the Lamb.
W.A.R.

MR. NOBODY.

I know a funny little man,
As quiet as a mouse,
Who does the mischief that is done
In everybody's house!
There's no one ever sees his face,
And yet we all agree
That every plate we break was
cracked
By Mr. Nobody.

'Tis he who always tears our
books,
Who leaves the door ajar:
He pulls the buttons from our
shirts,
And scatters pins afar.
That squeaking door will always
squeak,
For, prithee, don't you see,
We leave the oiling to be done
By Mr. Nobody.

He puts damp wood upon the fire
That kettles cannot boil;
His are the feet that brings in
mud
And all the carpets soil.

The papers always are mislaid:
Who had them last but he?
There's no one tosses them about
But Mr. Nobody.

The finger marks upon the door
By none of us are made;
We never leave the blinds unclosed,
To let the curtains fade.
The ink we never spill, the boots
That lying round you see
Are not our boots; they all belong
To Mr. Nobody.

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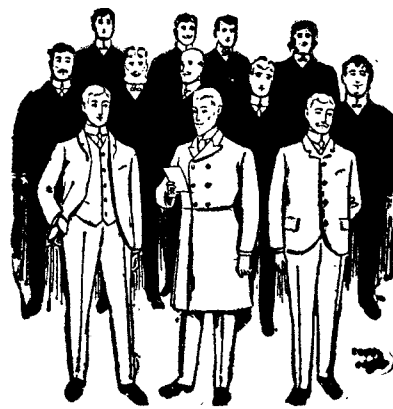
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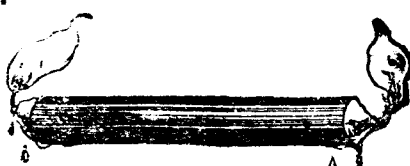


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