

A Diocese of Nearly 100,000 Square Miles.

(By Rt. Rev. J. W. Shaw, D. D. Bishop of San Antonio)

Although I have expressed briefly, but I hope none the less appreciatively, my heartfelt gratitude to a former number of Extension for the very valuable assistance the directors have given me toward the education of my seminarians, still in view of the magnitude of the work to be done in this vast diocese, the appalling religious destitution on every side, and the untiring efforts of the secretaries with their unlimited resources to proselytize the poor and ignorant of my flock in out-of-the-way places, I feel that I must appeal to the charity of your readers to come to my rescue.

The simple and sturdy faith of these pioneer Christians still holds its gentle sway in the hearts of their children today. The Mexican child still drinks in with his mother's milk the Faith of his ancestors whom the saintly missionaries of by-gone days Christianized and civilized, when Texas was still a part of Mexico. Though they may under the stress of poverty or the plea of temporal advantages disseminate their Faith, Mexicans have enough native knowledge to know that they can not be other than Catholics, and that the religion which would ignore Christ's Blessed Mother can not be the one established by Him.

In this respect they are in striking contrast with the descendants of the Europeans who fled from poverty and persecution in their native land to find in Texas a home, and liberty to practice their Catholic faith, dearer to them than life itself. How many grand old Catholic names are now borne by those who are strangers to our Faith! Many small towns where Catholics were once numerous have now either none or only a small percentage! While I do not make this comparison to throw discredit upon the other nationalities, but rather to emphasize the fact of the terrible leakage the Church has sustained here, neither am I so sanguine as to believe that the Mexican people may not also lose their faith, not that they are convinced of the truth of another religion, but rather because they have neither churches, schools nor priests to keep alive the true Faith in their hearts.

We can not censure the holy bishops and priests of other days for the truly deplorable condition that confronts their successors in the ministry; with immense distances to traverse and with a scattered flock as poor as they were themselves in this world's goods, they could but scantily provide for the future. Among a people nomadic by nature, devoid of the blessings of education and whose life was a constant struggle, they could neither expect vocations, which would ripen into future laborers in the ministry, nor could they expect means to build churches and schools. Besides preaching they could do little else than administer the sacraments. In this way these heroes of the Faith wore themselves out going from place to place.

With a largely increased population, for the Mexican is a strong believer in large families, and many Catholics, not rich in temporal things, coming continually to this section from other States and countries of Europe, and speaking diverse tongues and all wanting their own churches and priests of their own nationalities, the difficulties of meeting all these calls is increased manifold.

What I write here is from personal experience, and that of only part of the diocese. Since coming here last May I have spent my time traveling in the diocese so as to get some idea of the needs of religion. Up to the present I have not seen more than a third of it, and though my heart has exulted over the churches and the convents and the zealous priests and religious doing noble work for the cause of our holy Faith and Christian education, still these evidences of religion are scarcely more than oases in the desert of spiritual desolation. I go now on mission trips with more or less fear and trembling for I am dreading what I may see; and the worst is yet to come when I go to visit the extreme western parts of the diocese.

To speak only of the country within a radius of a hundred miles of San Antonio, I see everywhere the most urgent need of churches, schools and missionaries if the Faith is to be kept alive in the hearts of the children who have received it in holy baptism. Here in the city of San Antonio we have close on to twenty thousand Mexicans, and there is only one church for them. I bear a central testimony to the disinterested and self-sacrificing spirit

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Among the signs of a weak stomach are uneasiness after eating, flat or nervous headache, and disagreeable belching.

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of the Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, who have charge of them, but what can a handful, hounded, too, as it is with the care of many outside missions, do among so many? Out of my property I have begun in a thickly settled Mexican portion of the city a combination church and school, which will be in charge of these missionaries, and the Theresian Sisters, who have lately come to us from Mexico. Had I the means I should at once build half a dozen more churches and schools in the suburbs to minister to the spiritual needs of the Mexicans, but alas! I am not able. I am forced by circumstances to see the adversaries of our holy Faith ply their unholy vocation of robbing our poor unlettered Mexican people of their birthright!

On the missions I have constantly said Mass and confirmed in miserable obscurity for the poverty of the people could afford no other for the King of Kings. Only a few weeks ago at Carrizozo Springs, where there is a large Mexican population, I was obliged to say Mass and confirm in a wretched tent, with the earth as the floor for this temple of the living God. Thanks to the zeal of the good Oblate Father, Rev. J. U. Wilson, who visits them regularly, the Faith has been kept alive in the hearts of these simple people. Their piety was truly edifying and their joy at seeing the bishop in their midst and sharing their humble fare simply recompensed me for the fatigue of the trip.

At Baxer there is a population of over seven hundred, with Mass once a month; at Rosville with a larger population there is no priest at all, and I could add many more examples. These instances at the very gates of the Episcopal City give a faint idea of the spiritual destitution not alone of the Mexicans around me but also of other nationalities. Great numbers will certainly be lost to the Church if I shall not be able very soon to supply them with the blessings of religion. At the present time I should easily use more than a dozen zealous priests, but alas! I have them not and it will be some years before I shall have them.

I am glad to say that the Oblate Fathers and the Spanish Fathers have done noble work in the missionary field and with the diocesan clergy cheerfully and uncomplainingly shared in the hardships of the poorest places. The record of their sacrifices for souls is faithfully kept in the Book of the Recording Angel; we can only show our heartfelt gratitude and bestow a word of praise and encouragement.

I forbear to write of the western section of the diocese, suffice it to say that in four counties alone there is an area of 14,967 square miles, with a considerable Catholic population for which there are two priests and six chapels, and that from reports the situation there is incomparably more deplorable. I say no more of this for I write only of what I have seen. My own people are willing and generous as far as their means will permit, but the calls that are already made upon their resources preclude their giving many substantial helps to relieve the spiritual necessities of their less favored brethren. I am forced therefore to appeal to the charity of your readers.

Surely there are among them not a few who have an abundance of this world's goods. May we not ask them in all confidence to make the Lord, from Whom they have received all good things, their debtor? Charity is never more pleasing to Almighty God than when exercised in behalf of souls famishing for the Bread of Life. My heart is filled with sorrow as I recall the words of the Prophet: "The little ones have asked for bread and there was none to break it unto them."

Help us, then, generous readers in the great work of providing future missionaries for our people. Let the little chapels and schools with which your charity will dot the plains and hillsides of his diocese of nearly one hundred thousand square miles bear witness that there dwells in your hearts the love of God and the love

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of your brethren, redeemed like you in the Blood of the Son of God.

Since writing the above a generous gentleman of the East has kindly promised a gift of \$500 for the erection of a little church at Carrizozo Springs. This gift will spare these poor people on to redouble their own efforts to add whatever their very meager resources can afford; and by contributing their labor this group of Christian souls will soon have the great happiness to meet at their little chapel and enjoy the consolations of their holy Faith in the opportunities to attend divine services and receive the sacraments in a more fitting manner. The existence of the chapel in their midst will mean a great deal to their simple and devout hearts. And the generous act of this devoted benefactor, directed to us by The Catholic Church Extension Society, will undoubtedly obtain for him and his loved ones no little favor from Heaven. May others follow such a good example!

The same good results will be accomplished in seven towns that will benefit to the extent of about \$4,000 in the designated gift of \$10,000 to the poor missions in charge of the Oblate Fathers. Asherton, to which \$400 was allotted, is a new settlement in great need of a chapel. Spofford Junction, which will receive the same amount, also has no chapel, although there are a hundred families. Knappa, to which \$300 was assigned, also has a hundred families, but no chapel. The people there will donate \$200.

Sabinal, a growing town, containing many Mexicans, has a frame chapel about twenty years old. A new one must be built soon, also a school for the children, since Protestants are making inroads on the Catholic population. Four hundred dollars was apportioned this place.

Del Rio will receive \$1,000 for a badly needed addition to the school, which six hundred more pupils would attend if there were room. The new addition will enable the nuns to receive these little ones and brighten their poverty stricken lives by a Christian education.

Sanderson will receive \$400 towards a chapel which is urgently needed. In Chihuahua, a suburb of Del Rio, there are two large settlements of Mexicans, and for this place \$500 was doated.

Batesville, with about five hundred Mexicans, is without a chapel, but a designated gift from the Society has been promised, and work on the building will begin soon.

Another designated gift has cleared up my worry over Las Chissas, the most pressing of my missionary needs. The quick-silver mines at this place and at Terlingua are the most important in the United States. The two places are at present attended twice a year by an aged priest, and an extract from his letter will best show you how badly the ministrations of religion are needed there: "I am the only priest who has visited that locality. No bishop has ever been there. Nevertheless, confirmation is needed, there perhaps more than in any other village in the diocese. Children, youths, middle-aged persons, perhaps of fifty to sixty years of age, are without the holy sacrament which makes soldiers of Christ. I suppose there will be about five hundred to be confirmed. There will be hard work for the priests as there are young men and women to be instructed who have never gone to confession."

The Mines and Uyalde are two other places which owe much to the Society, that is aiding so effectively in the work beloved of the Master—the preaching of the Gospel to the poor. But very much yet remains to be done. I have Masses said for all the benefactors of the diocese.—Extension.

Literary Note.

"Among the Algonquins," Volume III, of the history of the "Pioneer Priests of North America," by the Rev. Thomas J. Campbell, is now sent out by the publishers the America Press, 59 E. 83rd St., New York. Its pages tell of the stirring record of the group of heroes and martyrs who labored among the Algonquins the confederation that made a larger figure in our history than any other Indian family. The Algonquins were the great nation that claimed as their own almost all the upper regions of the North American Continent. In what is now the United States, New England was counted as their country, and so was the thral on the Hudson in New York, as well as New Jersey, a part of Virginia and North Carolina, Kentucky, Illinois and Wisconsin. It is commonly asserted that the Algonquins were the noblest North American Indians but Father Campbell, in his graphic narrative offers ample evidence that their history displays hardly any notable difference from their fellow savages. Among them Paul Le Jeune, James Buteux, Gabriel Druillettes, Charles Albanel, Claude Allouez, James Marquette, Francis de Crespien, Anthony Sylvie, Anthony Dalmas, Gabriel Maret, Peter Laure, John Aulneau and Sebastian Rale toiled and strove for years in the effort to win them to civilization and the acceptance of the light of Faith. Most of the time it was a life of uninterupted horror, but like true soldiers these heroic men

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never flinched in the fierce battle they had set for themselves to save the souls of these degraded savages. A number of them were identified besides with the great events of their time. Albanel sought out Radisson at the North Sea. Sylvie and Maret and Dalmas accompanied Iberville in his wild raids. Marquette's name is linked with Joliet's in the discovery of the Mississippi. Druillettes was the first envoy from Canada seeking a treaty of reciprocity with New England, and Rale was the martyr whose fate settled the fight for the possession of the great State of Maine. Father Campbell's telling pages do full justice to the heroic and brilliant period of their apostolic labors. And many appropriate illustrations, portraits and maps add to the interest and explain more fully the narrative.

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