

FEBRUARY 4, 1899

LEAGUE OF THE SACRED HEART.

GENERAL INTENTION FOR FEBRUARY, 1899.

Priests in Parishes.

Recommended to our Prayers by His Holiness, Leo XIII.

American Messenger of the Sacred Heart. We pray for our priests continually. We join with them in the august prayer of the Mass, and we kneel with them before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, invoking blessings upon them through whose ministry we have the inestimable blessings of Christ's Eucharistic Presence.

It is right that we should pray for all those who are "ordained for men in the things that appertain to God," since, as our mediators with God, they all must offer gifts and sacrifices for our sins. It is, therefore, most proper and natural that we should pray unremittingly for priests whose occupations bring them directly and constantly into contact with ourselves, whose lives and energies are devoted to our welfare, and who by a wise constitution of the Church dwell in our midst in such close and familiar relations with us as to form with us the household of the faith, shepherds keeping their flocks in the great fold of the Chief Pastor, and able to say for their several sheep, as He says of all: "I know mine and mine know me."

A parish is wholly a Catholic creation. It is so constituted as to enable Bishops and priests to carry out the design of Christ in appointing Peter to be His Vicar, with the Apostles, His disciples and their successors to take His place in extending the benefits of the Redemption to souls. Its object is to make certain priests and their assistants responsible for the salvation of a definite body of people, to whom they are to give the most careful personal attention. The priests of a parish are in every case selected and appointed by the Bishop; the parishioners usually are those who dwell within a certain district, also determined by the Bishop, though sometimes those who dwell beyond the limits of a parish may become parishioners by fulfilling certain conditions which the Bishop again must name. In any case the parish priests must live among the faithful confided to their care, and dedicate their whole life to the welfare of the parish. As much as possible they are to remain with their several flocks, so as to know them thoroughly, watch them growing from infancy to maturity, study their characters, observe their needs, recognize their various capabilities, and be ready always to keep them from error, to prevent them from falling, to confirm them in virtue, and inspire them with zeal. The priest in a parish is verily a spiritual father to the souls under his care, and gladly do the faithful give him this title, and all the love and veneration it calls for.

Since, therefore, we are always the special objects of their paternal solicitude, since we are ever in their prayers, we should not ask why we are invited to pray especially at this time for those for whom we pray at all times. Much as we may pray for them we cannot realize how frequent and fervent our prayers for them should be, without recalling, from time to time, how well they deserve and how greatly they need our prayers, and how our own obligations of gratitude and piety should move us to make intercession for them above all other men.

The priests who build up and maintain our parishes deserve our special prayers at all times, because they sacrifice themselves for our benefit and devote their lives to labor for our salvation. In the spirit of the chief duty of the priesthood, which is to offer up sacrifices for sins, they begin by making their own sacrifice, leaving house and brethren, sisters, father and mother, wife and children, lands and all things, in the name of Christ. To be entirely conformed to Him, the great High Priest, they leave home and kindred, and go to dwell in the company of their fellow priests; consecrated for the exercise of divine worship and for the administration of holy things, they withdraw as much as possible, not merely from the evil influences of the world, but even from its lawful and innocent associations, lest anything earthly should distract them from the things that appertain to God, lest the things that are their own might keep them from the things that are Jesus Christ's, and lest secular ties, pursuits, or pleasures might hinder them from working for our good. They are in the world but not of it, they stand apart, not to live solely for themselves, but the better to help us; they are never aloof from us, because they are constituted mediators between God and man.

The sacrifice a priest must make before receiving Holy Orders cannot be estimated by simply enumerating the things he must leave or forsake. It must be measured by the generosity with which it is made, by the fact that it is to be lifelong, and by the motive of charity which prompts him to make it for others as well as for himself. Its earnestness also must be considered, for it is made in all sincerity and with every possible precaution to persevere in the life of privation thus begun, by sworn submission to the authority of

the Bishop and other ecclesiastical authorities, by giving up the opportunities of engaging in commercial life to live in a spirit of poverty, and by a promise, which is considered as binding as a vow, to lead a life of celibacy, so as to be forever and entirely free to work for God's glory and for the salvation of souls.

How well our priests deserve our prayers by the sacrifices they make in order to dedicate themselves to labor for our welfare, we can only judge when we remember that no men in the world realize more clearly than they the nature and extent of that sacrifice, experiencing, as they do, its hardships already in their seminary life. The sacrifice once made, the priest who is to engage in parish work assumes the responsibility and obligations of his office, which also have been explained to him most thoroughly during the seminary course, and put before him in the solitude of retreat to be measured and weighed solemnly in God's presence, so that no man entering a profession is made to study its responsibilities as conscientiously as our candidates for the priesthood. With this clear knowledge of what he is undertaking for our sake, the young priest generously enters the labors of his vocation, and the experience of each day but makes his sense of responsibility all the more vivid and trying, and his obligations more numerous and exacting.

With responsibility comes labor, the never-ending lot of a priest who gives himself to parish work. Indeed, in certain religious orders, the consecrated term used to designate a priest engaged in parish duty is the significant Latin term *operarius*, or workman in the sanctuary or pulpit on Sunday, in the confessional or parochial office, in the schools or homes of his parishioners the rest of the week, from early morning until late at night. His night's rest often disturbed, and his day laden with cares, he is constantly weighed down in body and mind, and often unable from sheer fatigue and ceaseless demands on his time, to devote himself to all his high and holy tasks as he longs to do. He is responsible for saving and perfecting every soul under his care as well as his own, and instead of being free to meditate and study spiritual books, or even to prepare his sermons properly, too frequently his very thanksgiving after Holy Mass is interpreted, and one duty presses upon another so rapidly that he barely finds time for reading his Office, and with difficulty can recollect his thoughts sufficiently for this pious duty. The catechism class and the schoolroom, the parish register and account books, the adornment of the sanctuary and the altar, the training of altar boys, the management of a choir, the direction of pious and benevolent associations, and the constant administration of the sacraments, baptisms, marriages, first Communion and confirmation classes, sick calls and funerals, the instruction of converts, and all the special cases of poor to be relieved, the distressed to be comforted, the afflicted to be consoled, of scandals to be averted or repaired, of injustice to be exposed, of crimes to be prevented, of wrong to be righted, of virtue to be protected and sustained,—these are only the ordinary tasks of a priestly life, not to mention the special and extraordinary occupations or solitudes with which every faithful priest is invariably charged.

The priest's parochial duties are, therefore, so numerous and so supernatural in their nature as to require extraordinary helps of divine grace, and special favors of Divine Providence for their accomplishment. Difficult as they are in themselves, they are doubly so in our country where our parishes are still but quasi or missionary parishes. With comparatively few exceptions they are constantly changing. A parish is scarcely built up and completely established before the change begins; now it is a change of parish limits, or new people come to dwell within the limits, while old parishioners move away, and this change means new requirements, and different resources; again a church must be renovated or replaced by a larger or finer structure, or rectory, school, society rooms and library must be provided, and in many dioceses all this material work devolves upon the priest: he is thus made responsible for the temporal as well as for the spiritual interests of his parish, and that one or other of these interests does not suffer is due only to the self-sacrifice and devotion with which our pastors and their assistants apply themselves to both.

Surely our parish priests need our prayers quite as much as they deserve them. If their hands are constantly uplifted in prayer for us, we must needs stand by to keep them uplifted when human infirmity leaves them unable to sustain their many burdens. They need our prayers to keep up their disposition and desire for their own and our perfection, when all around them is a world of disorder, indifference, lukewarmness, ingratitude, discontent and depravity. They need our prayers to sustain their zeal in spite of the discouragement which seizes their spirit when they are left without resources or co-operation, and confronted with apparent failure, or met by contradiction. They need our prayers to keep their faith strong and vivid, their confidence unwavering, their prudence at once simple and wary, their fortitude indomitable and their reverence for holy things so conspicuous, as to compel and justify the pious reverence we have for them.

We might go on forever enumerating the needs of a priest in parish work and his titles to our prayers. When all is said each one of us can quietly recall the special blessings we

owe to their ministrations. Suppose for a moment—and may God avert the misfortune!—that their number should be lessened, that their spirit of piety and zeal should fail, or that they should be taken from us, as in some European countries, or prevented from devoting themselves freely to our welfare. Without making the supposition, we have reason to know too well how many of our brethren in our own country are falling away from the faith for want of priests, and too often we have to deplore the good left undone and the evils caused by priests who are careless and indolent, worldly and even faithless to their holy calling. "Like people like priest," was a saying of the prophets, and it means that our lot is bound up with theirs, and that as we depend on them for instruction, example and all the sacramental channels of grace, so they in turn, look to us for prayers and for the encouragement afforded them by our co-operation with them, and for the benefits we derive from their ministry. We must therefore pray for the priests who are building up and maintaining our parishes and laboring night and day for our welfare, that their number may be increased so that every hamlet in our land and in the territory lately brought under our control, may have the blessing of their ministry, that they may grow in piety and zeal, and impart their own spirit to ourselves so abundantly that the Catholic life, thus engendered and propagated, may compel not only the admiration of sectarians and unbelievers, but also by divine grace, the acceptance of our holy faith. While blessing God for His mercy in providing us with so many good and zealous priests, who go about their work quietly and humbly with so much consolation for our souls, we must pray that the good work they are doing may be multiplied by the proper co-operation of the laity, that their holy lives and example may influence even those who do not believe as we do, to recognize the divine forces at work in our holy religion, and that God may make every one of them "a faithful priest, who shall do according to my heart, and my soul."

IN CATHOLIC ENGLAND.

The Scene Attending The Reconciliation of The Kingdom With Rome During the Reign of Queen Mary.

In Froude's History of England—a work, by the way, which is anything but friendly or even fair to the Church—there occurs the following interesting description of the ceremony by which the English nation was formally re-admitted to Catholic unity after the separation that occurred during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI: "And now St. Andrew's day (Nov. 30, 1554) was come; a day, as was then hoped, which would be remembered with awe and gratitude throughout all ages of English history. Being the festival of the institution of the Order of the Golden Fleece, High Mass was sung in the morning in Westminster Abbey; Philip, Alva and Ruy Gomez attended in their robes, with six hundred Spanish cavaliers. The Knights of the Garter were present in gorgeous costume, and nave and transept were thronged with the blended chivalry of England and Castile. It was two o'clock before the service was concluded. Philip returned to the palace to dinner, and the brief November afternoon was drawing in when the Parliament reassembled at the palace. At the upper end of the great hall a square platform had now been raised several steps above the floor, on which three chairs were placed, two under a canopy of cloth of gold for the king and queen, a third on the right, removed a little distance from them, for the legate. Below the platform benches were placed longitudinally towards either wall. The Bishops sat on the side of the legate, the lay peers opposite them on the left. The Commons sat on rows of cross benches in front, and beyond them were the miscellaneous crowd of spectators, sitting or standing as they could find room."

"When the stir which had been caused by their entrance was over, Gardiner mounted a tribune, and in the now fast-fading light he bowed to the king and queen, and declared the resolution at which the House had arrived. Then, turning to the lords and commons, he asked if they continued in the same mind. Four hundred voices answered, 'We do.' 'Will you, then,' he said, 'that I proceed in your names to supplicate for our absolution, that we may be received again into the body of the Holy Catholic Church, under the Pope, the supreme head thereof?' Again the voices assented. The chancellor drew a scroll from under his robe, ascended the platform and presented it unfolded on his knee to the queen. The queen looked through it, then gave it to Philip, who looked through it also, and returned it. The chancellor then rose and read. "Having completed the reading, the chancellor again presented the petition. The king and queen went through the forms of intercession, and a secretary read aloud; first, the legate's original commission; and, next, the all-important extended form of it.

"Pole's share of the ceremony was now to begin. "He first spoke a few words from his seat: 'Much indeed, he said, the English nation had to thank the Almighty for recalling them to His fold. Once again God had given a token of His special favor to the realm; for as this nation, in the time of the primitive church, was the first to be called

out of the darkness of heathenism, so now they were the first to whom God had given grace to repent of their schism; and if their repentance was sincere, how could the angels, who rejoice at the conversion of a single sinner, triumph at the recovery of a great and noble people.

"He moved to rise: Mary and Philip, seeing that the crisis was approaching, fell on their knees, and the assembly dropped at their example; while in dead silence, across the dimly lighted hall came the low, awful words of the absolution.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, which with His most precious blood had redeemed and washed us from all our sins and iniquities, that He might purchase unto Himself a glorious spouse without spot or wrinkle, whom the Father hath appointed head over all His Church—He by His mercy absolves you, and we, by Apostolic authority given to us by the Most Holy Lord Pope Julius the Third, His vice-regent on earth, do absolve and deliver you, and every one of you, with this whole realm and the dominions thereof, from all heresy and schism, and from all and every judgment, censure and pain for that cause incurred; and we do restore you again into the unity of our mother, the Holy Church, in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

"Amidst the hushed breathing every tone was audible, and at the pauses were heard the smothered sobs of the queen. 'Amen, amen,' rose in answer from many voices. Some were really affected; some were caught for the moment with a contagion which it was hard to resist; some threw themselves weeping into each other's arms. King, queen and Parliament, rising from their knees, went immediately—the legate leading—into the chapel of the palace, where the choir, with the rolling organ, sang "Te Deum;" and Pole closed the scene with a benediction from the altar.

PROTESTANTISM IN ITALY.

The New York "Times" speaks as follows of a new book just published by Dr. Taylor, a Protestant missionary, who has been working for the evangelization of Italy:

The fascinating title, "Italy and the Italians," is simply a mask behind which is an ingenious missionary report. According to Dr. Taylor, active and persistent efforts have been made since 1850, at a large financial expense, to convert Italians from Romanism to Protestantism. To show with what success these efforts have been crowned it is only necessary to quote the figures which the author furnishes in the chapter entitled "The Evangelization of Italy." Statistics of mission work in Italy show as a result of over forty years of labor, that there are now approximately 5,000 Protestant communicants in that country. This total, of course, does not include the Waldenses, who dwell in the Piedmont valleys, and for centuries have mostly been of the Protestant faith. It has even been said that they were reformers before the Reformation. But the combined efforts of these sturdy Waldensian mountaineers and of zealous foreign missionaries have secured less than 6,000 converts, who in the midst of a population of over 30,000,000 Italians must seem few indeed. To accomplish this small accession to Protestantism millions of dollars have undoubtedly been expended, and this raises the question, Does it pay to go into a Christian community for the purpose of converting an enormous expense, followers of one Christian faith to membership in another Christian faith? Would it not be better for foreign mission boards to invest the large sums thus expended in Italy in efforts to convert the heathen—the genuine heathen? May be the workers prefer the surroundings of comforts of Italian life to life as found and reported in Central Africa.

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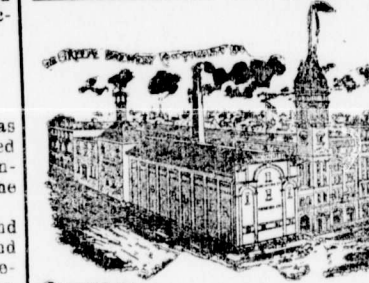


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PARLIAMENTARY NOTICE.

MONDAY, 13th February next, will be the last day for receiving Petitions for Private Bills.

MONDAY, 20th February next, will be the last day for introducing Private Bills.

FRIDAY, 3rd March next, will be the last day for receiving Reports of Committees on Private Bills. CHARLES CLARKE, Clerk of Legislative Assembly. Toronto, 10th Jan., 1899. 1056-3.

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