

The Gift Of Faith.

The general intention, month of December, recommended to members of the League of the Sacred Heart by His Holiness, Leo XIII.

"What dost thou ask from the Church of God?" is the question put by the minister of the Church to the candidate for baptism; and the answer is: "Faith." And he continues: "What wilt thou give thee?" The sponsors answer: "Eternal life." The sacrament is conferred as the outward sign of the grace which comes into the soul to begin in it the life which is to grow and fructify into eternity.

Faith is a divine virtue which is infused into the soul, enlightening it to accept truths which are altogether above the natural powers of man. It is supernatural for this reason, and for the reason that its effect, which is to make us assent to the Word of God, is also beyond our natural powers. It is the pure gift of God, and all we can do towards obtaining it is to dispose our minds and hearts to receive it and treasure it as the greatest blessing we can have from Him, for it is the first step to every other blessing; without faith it is impossible to please God, to do all that is necessary to work out our salvation.

In order to dispose ourselves to receive the gift of faith, and, after having received it, to treasure it above everything else, many things are necessary. First of all, we should be reasonable enough to admit that although by the natural powers of reason we may come to know the existence of God and some of His attributes, we can never know these either with the certainty or the fulness of knowledge, which comes with His own revelation. Ordinarily some humility is needed to be even thus far reasonable; for intellectual pride is only too likely to make us assume that the revelations of nature are enough for us, and that our intellects are quite alert and penetrating enough to read the secrets of nature. Next, we should be reasonable, and this means humble, enough to accept God's revelation in the manner in which He chooses to give it, and to respect it, both in the written Word, or Sacred Scripture, and the voice of Tradition by which the integrity, as well as the meaning and force of the written word are handed down to us.

A disposition of this kind is necessarily prayerful, and this is why we are advised to pray to obtain the gift of faith, if we do not already possess it, or to keep it, if we have already been blessed with it. We can pray also that others may obtain and preserve it, and, indeed we do not really appreciate the value of the gift of faith unless we do all in our power that others, as well as ourselves, may possess and cultivate it. We owe it to our friends to pray that they may have it, and we are bound to do our share to help all mankind to come to the knowledge of the truth, by praying for their enlightenment, conciliating them by our example, by propagating truth in every manner possible according to our vocation in life, by teaching catechism, by circulating religious literature, by preaching if we be authorized to do so, by contributing to the support of the Church, the missions, and the various societies which are established simply for the propagation of the faith, such, for instance, as the society which is now being established everywhere in this country for preserving the faith among our Indian children.

In this matter we have grave problems on our hands in this country. We have the children of the household to keep in the faith, by our schools, our catechism classes, our libraries. We have millions of negroes, and thousands of Indians, whose nations of immigrants are pouring daily into our country, to remind us that, just as our fathers and mothers were befriended by God's ministers, aided by the collections of the faithful, so, too, we are bound by our zeal and generosity to help provide for these good people, who though unknown to us, are not strangers and foreigners, but "fellow-citizens with the saints, and the domestic of God." Time was when the Catholics of the United States,

of Irish origin most of them, looked to France for the means of support for churches and priests. It is now high time that we do our share to provide the same benefits not only for ourselves, but in sheer gratitude for others, especially for the Indians and negroes, for the hosts of immigrants coming to our shores, and for the vast multitude of our fellow-citizens, who need our effort and example to come to a knowledge of the truth.—The Guidon.

A Convent of Blind Nuns.

There have been some noted poets and authors who lost their sight, and really became famous after their blindness came on. In ancient times there is Homer, who is described as going about repeating his celebrated poem of the "Iliad." There is Milton, who dictated his "Paradise Lost" to his daughters, and they read to him Latin and Greek without understanding either.

In America two of the greatest historians, Prescott and Parkman, were almost blind. Their secretaries read to them the books they had to refer to, and then Prescott and Parkman dictated to them their celebrated histories.

In France the sculptor Vidal lost his sight when he was 20 years old, but with great courage and perseverance he continued the study of his art and became one of the greatest animal sculptors.

But these men had seen, whilst those born blind had no resource, if they were poor, except to beg.

When our Lord was on earth He cured all the blind who came to Him. No doubt the early Christians provided asylums for them.

The first great asylum spoken of in history is that founded by St. Louis, King of France, who died in 1282. He had a building put up called Les Quinze Vingts (the fifteen twenties), because it was to contain three hundred blind persons, and which still exists; but as yet nothing had been done to teach them to support themselves.

It was the beginning of the last century that the blind were given the opportunity to be independent, though in New York city they are still given \$50 a year. In France, Valentin Haüy and Louis de Braille were the great benefactors of the blind. The latter invented a system of six dots; their varied combinations represent the alphabet, numbers and notes of music.

In America, some seventy years ago, Dr. S. G. Howe established the first institution for the blind.

The books which were first used were printed with raised letters, but have been replaced by the de Braille system.

The inmates are given an excellent education. The blind cannot see, but their sense of smell, and particularly of touch and hearing, are most acute. They learn to sing and play on all instruments, and their memory is most remarkable. I visited the family of the doctor in a house adjoining the institution, and went there often to hear the blind play. One of them by the name of O'Brien, was a talented pianist at the age of 15. If he heard a piece played once, he would sit down and play it without missing a note. Once he heard Gottschalk playing a piece which he was composing. To the great surprise of the celebrated musician O'Brien played it after him.

The boys in the institution were taught trades—brush-making, chair-caning, making mattresses, etc. The girls were taught sewing—threading their needle with the tongue—crocheting and knitting and washing. Some of the boys who were good musicians became teachers and organists in churches.

The most remarkable inmate in the institution was Laura Bridgeman, who, though deaf, and dumb and blind, pursued her studies as far as algebra.

Helen Keller, as afflicted as Laura, is most talented. When only seven years old she wrote poetry. She is now in Cambridge, in Radcliffe College, where she expects to graduate. Some one remarked to me that her teacher, Miss Sullivan, must be still more remarkable, for she was to convey her knowledge and lectures by spelling every word, and forming with her hand the letters upon the hand of Helen.

As for writing, the blind use now a typewriter. I have a young friend who is blind; she writes all her letters. She has a beautiful voice and is very charitable. She visits the children's hospital and a home for blind women, and she carries to them many comforts and sings to them.

But the blind Catholic woman who wished to devote herself to God no

convent would receive. God raised up for this work in France two noble souls, Mother Bergunon and l'Abbe Juge.

When a young girl Mother Bergunon wished to enter a convent, but her parents were opposed to this. Later, when free, with her small means, she opened an orphanage for young girls to earn a living by sewing. Some blind girls came also, but at first she was reluctant to receive them. Then gradually as their number increased, she proposed to her companions to live under a religious rule, and her community was formed. She found a great deal of help in the Abbe Juge, who in sympathy with the blind, did all he could. By his influence and efforts he did a great deal for the convent.

The congregation was put under the patronage of St. Paul, who on his way to Damascus was stricken blind, and recovered his sight by the touch of Ananias. The institution receives one blind sister for every two seeing ones. Little blind girls are admitted at the age of 4, and brought up good Christians. They are taught some trade, and after they are grown up can go away or remain all their life in the convent.

Among these blind girls one was also deaf and dumb, and a seeing sister took charge of her and was able to prepare her to make her First Communion.

The sisters, whether blind or not, share in all the labors. In the kitchen one of the blind sisters is an excellent cook, and prepares all sorts of dainties and cakes, which are sold.

In the refectory they read in turn; now a blind one, then a seeing one. In the workshop the blind sew, embroider and make tapestry. By touch they distinguish not only the colors but the shades, and the skilled ones teach the little girls; by their own experience they know what difficulties they have to overcome. The blind always use the expression: "I saw," and when speaking with them I would say: "Look at this."

Among the blind sisters are fine musicians. They have also workshops, where they make brushes, paper bags, ropes; they also do washing and ironing, etc. They have a printing press, and they print most of the books used in the schools. They also have two reviews called La Valentin Haüy and Le Braille, after the names of the French benefactors.

Thus the souls who longed to devote themselves to God and their fellow creatures found a place to follow their vocations. Perhaps some day the Sisters of St. Paul may come to America so that the Catholic blind may find a place where, besides receiving a secular education, they will be brought up in their own faith, and those wishing to enter a religious life will have an opportunity to fulfill their wish.—L. Saniewska in Young Catholic.

The Beacon Cross.

Rev. A. Jacquet, S.J., who was rendered insane recently by the terrible trials of missionary labor at Nome, Alaska, was the originator of an idea which the City Council of Nome has voted to perpetuate.

In the winter the greater part of the 24 hours is dark in the far North, and travelers on the snow-obscured trails too often lose themselves on the flat, desolate tundra when the brief daylight fades, and not infrequently there is a tragic end to the journey. Father Jacquet wanted to make the high spire of St. Joseph's Church a beacon, and he had it surmounted by a large cross fitted with electric lights.

All last winter this cross flashed out during the long Arctic darkness and many a weary wanderer, when about to give up hope, was inspired to fresh efforts by catching a distant glimpse of the beacon cross, and with that light succeeded in struggling to Nome. People who spent last winter there say it is hard to compute the number of casualties the flaming cross averted.

Recognizing the great importance to the city of the beacon the city fathers of Nome have voted to light the cross all winter at the city's expense, and now for miles around the shining cross guides belated travelers to Nome.

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THREE CONVERSIONS.

During the present year there has been republished in France the "Memoirs of a Sister of Charity." She belonged to a whole family, was born in 1750 and died in 1832. During her long life she passed through many trials; was imprisoned in 1793, and escaped the guillotine miraculously as Robespierre fell. After leading a most useful life she was sent to end her days in the small town near which had been her birthplace, and was in charge of the hospital. Besides the sick brought there she went to visit the poor ones in their homes; but some, though rich in this world's goods, were destitute of God's grace, and these attracted her still more.

Outside of the town there was a property called La Ganerie. It had property called La Ganerie. It had noble family. It was confiscated and sold to a petty lawyer, who became a member of the convention, and as such voted the death of Louis XVI, and approved of all the deeds of the Reign of Terror.

After the fall of Robespierre he went abroad, and made by dishonest means what was then a large fortune. He returned after many years to the Ganerie, thinking his deeds were unknown there. But he was mistaken; the inhabitants shrank from him, though he sent money to the mairie for the poor; and himself, his wife, and daughter led a most lonely life.

But the Sister of Charity, remembering the example of her Saviour, who had come to save sinners, when she met this wretched man gave him a bow of recognition. Of course he never went to church, nor his wife; the daughter was seen alone at Mass.

The Conventuel, as the inhabitants called him, fell sick. He had a cancer, and such was the horror people had of him that even the doctor of the place would have nothing to do with him, and he had to send for one to a distant town.

Remembering the politeness of the Sister, the Conventuel sent for her, and she was horrified to see with what harshness their daughter Cornelle treated her parents. As the Sister went out she asked her to accompany her to the hospital. Cornelle was ignorant of her religion, and all she knew was that her father and mother would be damned, and hence her harshness; and she told her belief to the Sister.

On hearing this the Sister reproved her severely; instructed her, and told her of God's mercy to sinners. She made her promise to change her conduct towards her parents, and show herself a dutiful daughter.

The Sister continued her visits daily. She would dress the sores of the poor man when the doctor could not come, and whilst relieving the pain of the body would drop a few words inviting the man to heal his soul, which was in a much worse condition than his body.

Her patience and charity were finally rewarded, and he asked to see Monsieur le Cure.

In the meantime his wife, who was present whenever the Sister came, underwent also a change of heart, and they both made their peace with God. The man was not only resigned, but was glad to suffer that he might expiate his crimes. They had been married during the Reign of Terror by a magistrate, and they asked the priest to bless their marriage, the wife sitting by the bedside of her dying husband.

He received the last Sacraments, and his death was most peaceful. The inhabitants, hearing from their cure of the pious end of the Conventuel, attended his funeral, and united their prayers with those of the Church for the repose of his soul.

Their conduct changed towards his wife and daughter. When they met them, they would bow to them pleasantly.

The wife, however, only survived her husband a month, and Cornelle was left mistress of what was considered in the place a large fortune. After the funeral she asked the Sister to take her into the hospital.

The next morning Cornelle called on the Sister. She told she knew her father's fortune was made by dishonest means. She wanted to dispose of it for the benefit of the poor. She would give the Ganerie to be arranged for a school for poor children, under the care of Christian Brothers, and of Sisters; then she wanted to add a wing to the hospital for the old, indigent people. Afterwards she humbly asked the Sister to give her a letter to the mother of the house of the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul. She wanted to devote her life to the care of the

sick and poor, and would keep only enough money for her dowry on entering the novitiate.

There was one thing more Cornelle wanted to say to the Sister, but she was ashamed to do so. Finally she acknowledged she had never been baptized.

"Your parents had already told me so," said the Sister. "I will tell Monsieur le Cure; you will be privately baptized and you will make your First Communion."

A few days after, before the door of the church was opened to the faithful for Mass, Cornelle was baptized, the Sister acting as sponsor. Then at Mass she went to Communion with the Sisters.

She remained in the hospital with them till she had settled her affairs. She then went to Paris to enter the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity. The Sister adds that the Mother wrote that Cornelle edified all by her piety and charity. Cornelle in her letters spoke of her great happiness in taking care of the poor and unfortunate.—The Young Catholic.

Another View of The Irish Question.

London "Truth" in its issue of Nov. 27th, says:—

Ireland has been so much "discovered" within the last few years that it ought to be by this time the most found-out country in the world. Nevertheless, another traveller, with experiences in Uganda, has been on a voyage of discovery round the Green Isle, under the aegis of a British newspaper. The result of this voyage is being related with the portentous gravity of a certain class of British journals when dealing with Ireland. The remembrance of some notorious facts in connection with the country would help the situation far more than the observations of the most intelligent traveller.

For instance, it is an incontrovertible fact that Ireland is Ireland and inhabited by the Irish. Also that the Irish are Irish according to their own method of being so, and do not sit at the feet of any other people to be sermonised, lectured, nor to receive instruction on the correct method of being Irish. They think they know best. Let England put itself in Ireland's place, and as it is said in Ireland, "the whole discovery will be found out." Imagine an Irishman going around England, not only on a voyage of discovery, but with the grave intent of teaching the people how to be English. Let liberty and equality come first, fraternity will follow, and the agreement to differ. The Irish will never cease to be Irish, any more than the Briton will give up being British.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE.

The Liverpool "Daily Post" recently published a census of church attendance taken on Sunday in that city. At the census they took eleven years ago the total was, morning and evening, 157,864. Last Sunday it was 178,477, which increase corresponds roughly with the increase in population. Of these attendances 67,898 were Church of England, Roman Catholic (one service only in the morning) 85,336, Wesleyan 23,778, Presbyterian 10,914, Calvinistic Methodist 8,927, Congregational 8,993, Baptist, 11,086, Unitarian 1,266, and various other sects 9,237.

THE QUESTION OF VOCATION.

There is an old Lancashire custom of putting a number of articles before a child and prophesying by the article which the child touches what he may become. The story goes of a Lancashire man who was at his wife's end to decide what to do with his offspring. So he placed on a table a sword, a Bible, an apple, and a box of pills. If the child touched the first he was to be a soldier, the second a clergyman, the third a greengrocer, and the last a doctor. It was a somewhat heterogeneous mess of professions, true enough, but it offered the advantage of a wide range of choice. After the experiment was over he met a boon friend. "Well, Jimmy, how did it get on?" asked the friend. "Did he take the sword or—?" "He took the lot, so I'm going to make him a lawyer."

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NOTES FROM ROME.

SPECIAL AUDIENCES.—On Wednesday, Nov. 16, says the London "Universe," His Excellency Count Nicolò Szeszen de Tornen, Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Austria-Hungary, accompanied by his wife and daughter, and Mr. Murphy, rector of the Irish College, in private and separate audience, were received by the Holy Father. On Thursday, in private and separate audience, His Holiness received His Eminence Cardinal Steinhuber, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Index; His Grace Mgr. Benzel, D.S.B., Bishop of Metz; Mgr. Mathieu, rector of the University of Laval, Quebec; and the Very Rev. George Chopin, rector of the Canadian College. On Friday the Holy Father received in private audience His Eminence Cardinal Serafino Vannutelli, Bishop of Frascati, Penitenciar Major. Other notable audiences also took place.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS.—On Sunday last, after having received in separate audience the Very Rev. Don Viltore Dorvaga, Abbot of Montevergine, His Holiness received several other distinguished persons. On Tuesday Mgr. O'Callaghan, Bishop of Cork, and Mgr. Drohokczey, Greek-Ruthenian Bishop of Crisio, in Croatia, were received, in private and separate audience, by His Holiness. Then, passing through the Sala of the Throne, the Holy Father received the Very Rev. Paul Burgeois, Abbot of the Grand St. Bernard, the Rev. Mother-General of the Daughters of Our Lady of Mercy of Savona, and the Baroness De Turcksee, Lady-in-Waiting at the Royal Court of Bavaria. The Holy Father was then borne on the portico to the Sala Clementina, where the pilgrims from Croatia, of the diocese of Crisio, directed by the Bishop were assembled.

FEASTS.—On Tuesday morning, in the Apostolic Vatican Palace, the meeting of the Sacred Congregation of Rites took place, under the presidency of His Eminence Cardinal Pacchi, and decided: 1. concerning the devotion, according to the decrees of Urban VIII., paid to the Venerable Maria Michela of the Blessed Sacrament, foundress of the religious of the Most Holy Sacrament, and of Charity; 2. also of the devotion to the Venerable Alessia Ia Clerc, foundress of the Institute of Our Lady.

By letters of the Secretary of State, His Holiness has nominated Monsignor Domenico Gualtieri, Secretary of the Apostolic Nunciature of Lisbon.

On Thursday, the Feast of St. Stanislaus Kostka, was celebrated with the usual solemnity at the beautiful Church of St. Andrew, in the Quirinal, where the body of the saint reposes. At 7 a.m. His Eminence the Cardinal Vicar celebrated Mass, with general Communion. Later, there was Pontifical Mass, accompanied by beautiful music, directed by Maestro Moriconi. In the room occupied by the saint, and where he died, the Holy Father celebrated his first Mass.

A MEMORIAL.—In the studio of the eminent Roman sculptor, Commendatore Cesare Aurelia, in the Via Flaminian, outside Porta del Popolo, we have lately admired the beautiful bas-relief, for the altar, now in the hands of Signor Medici, intended for the cathedral of Armagh. This bas-relief is the representation of the Last Supper, by Leonardo da Vinci, and is most beautifully executed in high relief, the expression on the faces of our Saviour and the Apostles is wonderful. This work was ordered by His Eminence Cardinal Loguon on his last visit to Rome. Signor Aurelia has also just completed two very fine statues of the Sacred Heart and St. John the Evangelist, intended for the Church of St. John, in Philadelphia, U.S.A., and were ordered by the rector, Rev. Father Fisher.

FOR THE DEAD.—A solemn Requiem Mass has been celebrated for the deceased members of the Societa Primaria Romana, in the beautiful Church of Sta Maria Sopra Minerva. The president and all the members assisted at the Mass. His Grace Monsignor Burton, Bishop of Clifton, is stopping at the Minerva Hotel. Monsignor Leton, of the United States, will preach the Advent sermons in San Silvestro in Capite.

One I

I had been sitting for an hour in the shelter of a dismal shack that was lying in its days of usefulness, waiting an old man who was his boat and making repairs. I wondered how could venture alone on such weather, for quite blowing. Out beyond the harbor the billows rolled in a most threatening manner in the garb and manner of the old gentleman made that I had seen him before. He was not an ordinary though he went about in quite a sailor-like fashion.

When his sail was read, he gave a tug at the tiller, and then, without turning by name and said, "If you too tired you might give a pull on this rope. I recognized the voice, and in than it takes to mention the boat giving and receiving a warm hand-clasp, the fisherman in the usual seafaring way, but from Father He is known and revered from of the peninsula to the of "Why, father, what in brought you over here? you for a fisherman."

"Young man," he said, "of Apostles was a fisherman; I am I; I fish for souls, and for that purpose I am here. I friend Father Gardner is getting most too old for a anyway. He wrote me that a foot under me to come him over the holidays. A lately from Rome, whom is breaking in, will take people while I am away. boat left a message here saying that a priest was wanted old Mansell plantation at bay. The Mansells were d people. I said Mass in the many a time twenty-five years. I hear it is sadly altered. Father Gardner is sick, so just in time.

"All the men of the village with the fishing fleet or in her camps; otherwise some would accompany me. Not have any fear, as I am a sailor. It is some one to boat with me that I would. Maybe you would come also. He looked at me quizzically looked out over the threatening sea. He saw my hesitation, mind, my son; I was only sure I have made many losses than this by myself."

That decided me. "I am with you. How far is it?" "Well, it is not quite to you can compose your face look so frightened."

I gave a tug at the halyard, said, "Hoist away; I am following Father Hoyle to Patagonia. I thought you wouldn't go alone. To tell you the was very lonesome, and if I was not really urgent I would venture to make the trip myself. It is now ten o'clock. To reach Mansell's place by 11. As for this breeze, it is not be afraid of; it will only through that much quicker than a day in a boat, and the breeze the better; but years—". Here he paused and ed wistfully out over the big back, perhaps, to the full of the ardor of youth for religion, he volunteered then wild Florida mission; to tell parts of it are little to-day. He roused himself. "Well, well! it is childish I ting. I fear the bishop will retiring me; though God knows we are retired in this country generally in a wooden box. Poor Soggarth! And the many such among the bands and malarious swamp South, and parching plains West, toiling along uncomplained in the cause of Christ for of men.

After hoisting the sail, and lining closely to see that everything was in good condition and properly, he left me in the while he went back to see Gardner. When he returned from his actions and avoidance of conversation, had fetched the Blessed Sacrament. As he was about to shove off, he paused and said: "Have you courage enough for the trip. It may be six o'clock tomorrow by the time we get here again."

I hesitated as I compared the