

The Immaculate Conception.

Fiftieth Anniversary of the Promulgation of the Dogma.

Cardinal Vaughan on the Immaculate Conception.

Between the years 120 and 240 we have the testimony of three most distinguished writers regarding the teaching of the Christian world. In the earliest times respecting the position of the Blessed Virgin. St. Justin Martyr, St. Irenaeus, and Tertullian may be taken as representing the mind of Christendom at that date. St. Justin Martyr represents the teachings of Palestine and the East, and Tertullian of Rome, Africa and the West; whilst St. Irenaeus, being a disciple of St. Polycarp, who in turn was disciple of St. John the Evangelist, possessed, it may well be imagined, the clear and full teaching of Asia Minor and Gaul. Now what was the teaching of these three remarkable Fathers to the ancient Church? They simply taught that which was on the lips of every child of Ephesus in the fifth century, that Mary was the Mother of God, and the bringer of redemption; the second Eve, who brought to life, and the Mother of Him who rescued us from death. These Fathers, in every ingenious method of parallel imagination, ever love to compare Mary, the Virgin Mother, with the first Eve who fell and brought ruin on the human race. As Eve, by her disobedience and the want of faith, fell and lost the prize of everlasting beatitude for her children, so, on the other hand, Mary, by her obedience and her faith, became an active cause in the restoration of the human family. As Eve, by her eating the forbidden fruit, purchased death for her children, so Mary, through the efficacy of the Fruit of her womb—Jesus—gained for her children everlasting life. As all men fell in Eve, so all men rose again in Mary. As all men were darkened and weakened through the fall of the first woman, so, by the purity and faith and virtue of the second, light and strength were given to the children of men. Such is the teaching of these great lights of the early Church, placing the Blessed Virgin before the Christian world as the advocate and assistant and helper in undoing that which the first woman's prevarication had effected, and as a being worthy of special reverence and affection, and as one who had been allowed to exert an active influence in the great work of redemption and restoration. It is evident that a parallel that has been thus worked out by great teachers almost at the same period, and in such distant parts of the world, could not have been invented by each independently; their harmonious and, indeed, identical teaching, must have flowed from a common source. They simply repeated in their own way that which they had received, and in their turn handed down the traditions of their fathers. And when we come to reflect how nearly they lived upon the apostolic times, we can scarcely escape the conclusion that theirs could not be other than the teaching of St. John the Evangelist and those other chosen men who had drawn the doctrines of truth from their very fountain-head, the Saviour. It is not necessary to refer to other great Christian doctors who hand down the identical tradition in every part of the Christian world. They do not vary in their teachings. Read the writings of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, or St. Ephraim of Syria, and it is the same. St. Jerome, who represents Rome and Palestine, the disciple of that most accurate of theologians, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and of Didymus of Alexandria, tells the same tale. St. Augustine in Africa, St. Epiphanius in Cyprus, and Egypt, St. Peter Chrysologus of Ravenna, and St. Fulgentius of Africa, are in complete harmony with each other and with those who went before them—all demonstrating, beyond all power of denial, that there was one constant, persistent doctrine taught by the Church from the very first regarding the sanctity and dignity and power of the Holy Mother of God. And, indeed, does it not stand to common sense and propriety that the Mother who saved should not be placed in an inferior position to the mother who was the cause of the universal fall? If Eve became pure and clean and robed in grace from Adam's side, a spectacle of pleasure to God and joy

to angels, is it fitting that Mary should be less favored than she? Is it not natural and fitting that she too should begin her personal existence in the grace and favor of the Almighty? And would it not jar upon our feelings of propriety if she had been allowed to come under the serpent's tang? We feel it, we are sensible of the propriety of Mary's immunity from all stain of sin and all contact with the serpent; and we hold it to be a matter of simple fitness, apart from all other theological reasons, that the mother of Him who came to conquer sin should never be subject to sin's thralldom. And what is this else but the doctrine of what is called the "Immaculate Conception"? As John the Baptist was sanctified after he had lived in his mother's womb for three months, why should not Mary be sanctified from the first moment of her personal existence? If Eve, the mother of our sorrows, came sinless from Adam's side, why should not Mary be blessed with a like privilege? Why should not she be saved from the taint which her own Son was to wash out by the shedding of His precious blood? She whose Seed was to crush the serpent's head should not be crushed herself, or subject to its poison, even for a moment. Thus does her sanctity proceed from her Divine maternity, and receives its explanation from the very position which she occupies as Mother of the Redeemer of mankind from sin.

THE GREAT DOGMA.

Devotion to the Mother of God was practiced from the first in the church founded by her Divine Son. Her heroic and beautiful life was the subject of meditations of the ancient saints and of glowing pages in the writings of doctors, but it was reserved for modern times to offer her a richer and rarer tribute. Fifty years ago Pope Pius the Ninth, in the presence of an assembly of cardinals and bishops, promulgated the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The decree, which added yet another shining gem to the circlet which crowns our heavenly queen, was received with every manifestation of joy by the people who saw the eminent fitness of making an article of faith of the belief which had always prevailed among them that Christ was never, even remotely, under the dominion of Satan, as might be inferred had his mother for the briefest instant been touched by the taint which has "sullied the earth."

This doctrine is still further significant in our age, when unbelievers scorn the idea that the first man fell from grace and through his disobedience drew down upon his descendants the sorrowful inheritance not only of sin and death, but also of an inclination to evil, which we call original sin. They offer various explanations of this tendency and for the imperfect moral condition, ascribing natural causes always, rejecting all that savors of a supernatural explanation of events. The infinite wisdom of God has given us an opportunity to refute their defective teachings by a sincere devotion to Mary Immaculate, especially during this year of the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of the decree, by publicly acknowledging our belief that the Blessed Virgin alone of all the human race was preserved from original sin and that this signal favor was bestowed upon her because of her sacred destiny as the Mother of God, we hold up a shining, invincible shield to turn aside the shafts aimed by the godless and irreligious.

Turning for an instant from the vision of our glorious queen, crowned by twelve stars, with the moon beneath her feet, let us return in spirit to the days of Nazareth and contemplate the humble life of mother and Son, calling to mind the close communion that must have existed between those two who loved each other so tenderly. Even the hardest hearts are moved at sound of that word, mother, and we can well believe that the Man-God holds in very loving regard the most perfect mother the world has ever known. He has placed many graces in her hands, and she loves to bestow them upon those who faithfully serve her Son.

There is something terrifying in the thought of all that God has done for us, in the overpowering realization

tion that in spite of it all we are but frail, wavering reeds bending before each wind that blows.

But this infinite wisdom took account, too, of that phase of our reasoning, and He has supplied the surest and sweetest hope for our hour of despair. It was as He hung upon the cross in mortal anguish, the chalice of woe drained almost to the dregs, that He gave us this last great means of salvation. His mother, turn where we will His love is there before us, boundless, encompassing; not even His mother's love would He keep unshared, but willed that we, too, should be heirs to that tenderness, and her Immaculate Conception is but another hope and another promise, for does it not inspire greater confidence that our Mediator is absolutely pure and worthy to plead directly to that just God before whom we tremble and are afraid.

In the beautiful words of the Magificat we gain some insight into the heart of our Blessed Mother, for in greeting her cousin Elizabeth her tremulous joy in the wonderful mystery of the Incarnation, her consciousness of the exalted dignity which the Most High had conferred upon her and her own sweet humility found voice in this heavenly psalm, and, in repeating it we should lift up our hearts and thank God for all His favors and resolve to render her the most acceptable praise we can give her, imitation of those virtues which were united in her to full perfection.

Woman's life and woman's work is a subject which is receiving great attention at the present time, and while a reference is made now and then to the well-known fact that women owe the influential position which they now occupy to Christianity, it is rarely acknowledged that veneration of the Blessed Virgin brought about this happier condition. Yet not only is this true, but on reviewing the history of Christianity we find that from this veneration has sprung all that is best in literature and art and the most helpful and uplifting charities. The spotless and sublime life of the Mother of God has been the inspiration and model for the many beautiful characters who, whether in the retirement of the convent or the busy life of the world, have testified by their self-sacrificing devotion to duty, by their modest, gentle bearing to the permanent and far-reaching influence of her whose sacred destiny the angel Gabriel announced with the words, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women."

This salutation daily ascending to heaven, through all the centuries of Christianity, from the lips of the countless millions of Catholics who have sought Mary's intercession, with the words added by the Church "Pray for us now and at the hour of our death," has accomplished great and blessed things for the glory of God, and will continue to do so until the end of time.—Anna Cecilia Doyle, in the New World.

The Immaculate Conception and the Holy Rosary

The whole Christian world rejoices this month in the fiftieth anniversary of the proclamation of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception. The memory of many yet living will go back to the day when the holy Pontiff, Pius IX., pronounced that dogma amidst plaudits and rejoicings such as had greeted the definition of the Fathers of Ephesus when, fourteen centuries before, they indicated the divine maternity of Mary amongst the Nestorians. Those of Mary's children that had not the happiness to witness the auspicious day when the peerless, immaculate sanctity of their Mother was declared, rejoice that it is their privilege to celebrate the first Jubilee in commemoration of that definition. Harkening to the voice of Christ's Vicar, the faithful everywhere have manifested their filial devotion to the Immaculate Virgin, and their gratitude for the benefits she has showered on the Church and on individual souls, especially during the last half century.

First among those who should tender their tributes of affection and praise to the glorious Immaculate, are her favored children of the Rosary. She herself has taught them how to pray, and her Psalmist is not only the most efficacious means of impetrating her assistance, but also the song of praise that most rejoices and honors her. In the marvellous apparitions at Lourdes, which Holy Father in his Encyclical proclaiming the Jubilee mentions as one of the favors that followed the definition of the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady passed between her fingers a golden Rosary, her lips moving in prayer, as though she

wished to announce to the world that her own special devotion of the Rosary, tell us that they signify the efforts to do honor to her exalted privileges. Spiritual writers, in assigning symbolical reasons for the fifty Ave Marias in each part of the Rosary, tell us that they signify the year of jubilee that occurred among the Jews in every fiftieth year (Lev. xxv.) for through Mary we obtain, though in a higher sense, the pardon, the return of inheritance, the liberty, and the peace that the Levitical Jubilee secured for the Hebrew people. On the fiftieth anniversary of the solemn declaration of one of the greatest glories of their Queen, Rosarians should emulate in the Rosary their Hymn of Jubilee, the grand chorus of Hosannas and Alleluias, the celestial song with which saints and angels will greet her on that happy day. In the oft-repeated salutation, "Hail Mary, full of grace," let them blend with their meditation on the mysteries the thought of the fullness of grace with which her glorious soul was endowed. For the Blessed Virgin, says the Angelic Doctor, (Expositio in Salut. Ang.) is declared full of grace for three reasons: first, because her soul was filled with grace, i. e., she was never for a single instant stained with sin, and practised every virtue, whence it is said of her, "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee;" (Cant. iv., 7.) secondly, she was full of grace in regard to the influence of the soul upon the body, for so filled was the soul of Mary with this divine gift that grace poured from the soul over the body, so that it conceived the Son of God; thirdly, she possessed an abundance of grace sufficient to benefit all men, for in all danger safety can be found in this glorious Virgin. Therefore she says: "In me is all hope of life and virtue" (Eccles. xxiv 25.)

Queen conceived without original sin. Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, pray for us.

Jubilee of the Immaculate Conception, 1904.

We celebrate this year the Jubilee of the Immaculate Conception. Oh! Mary Immaculate! On this thirteenth glorious, thrice happy anniversary, raise thy pure hands to heaven for thy unhappy, thy fallen France. Land of saints and heroes! Dost thou not feel in thy innermost depths a throbbing, a trembling? Oh! will thou not awake, favored France, from thy deadly torpor ere it is too late? Oh, truly favored land, that first received into thy bosom the loved friends of Jesus, Lazarus, Mary and Martha! Oh! happy people! instructed by those who had seen His face, who had listened to His voice, who had rested at His feet! Oh! give not up to others thy birthright! St. Louis, son of Mary; St. Vincent de Paul, ye thousands of brilliant saints, sons and daughters of France, pray for your unhappy country! Do not let her become the prey of Hell! It rejoices already, it mocks, to have so well within its clutch this land of fruitful apostolates.

What other nation can compare with thee, oh beautiful France? Where is now thy strength, thy vitality? Thou that hast given birth to the Sisters of Charity, the Christian Brothers, the Daughters of Margaret Bourgeois, the Little Sisters of the Poor, and so many others! O! never, Hell, must it become yours! M. C.

Valcartier, Nov. 23, 1904.

The Immaculate Conception

December night, December night, how warming
Is all thy coldness to the Christian soul:
The very peace at each true heart is
steaming
In potent waves of love that surging
roll.

December night, December night, how glowing
Thy frozen rains upon our warm hearts lie;
Our God upon the vigil is bestowing
A thousand graces from the silver sky.

O moon, O symbol of Our Lady's whiteness,
O snow, O symbol of Our Lady's heart;
O night, chaste night, bejeweled with urgent brightness,
How sweet, how bright, how loving, kind thou art.

O miracle, to-morrow and to-morrow,
In tender reverence shall no praise abate;
For from all seasons shall we new jewels borrow
To deck the Mother born Immaculate.

—Maurice Francis Egan.

NOTES FROM THE CATHOLIC PARISHES OF THE CITY.

ST. PATRICK'S PARISH.
Sunday afternoon a largely attended meeting of the Holy Name Society, at which Rev. Dr. Luke Callaghan presided, was held. At the end of the meeting Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was imparted. The solemn Triduum in honor of the Immaculate Conception opened on Sunday evening, the pastor, Rev. Father M. Callaghan, preached the first sermon. On Monday evening, Rev. Dr. Luke Callaghan; Tuesday evening, Rev. P. Heffernan; Wednesday evening, Rev. Jas. Killoran. To-day at solemn High Mass, Rev. E. Polan will preach, and in the evening, Rev. W. H. FitzHenry, C.S.C., St. Laurent College, will be the preacher.

Next Sunday afternoon the election of officers of St. Patrick's Total Abstinence and Benefit Society for the coming year takes place.

ST. ANN'S PARISH.
The closing of the retreat for the young men of the parish took place on Sunday evening, when Rev. Father Strubbe, C.S.S.R., preached. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament closed the proceedings.

The solemn triduum in honor of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin opened on Monday evening, when the beautiful illuminations around the statue of the Immaculate Conception were lighted for the first time. The effect was pleasing in the extreme. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings the electric lights shone in all their brilliancy over the tastefully decorated altar and sanctuary, and from the back of the church made a pretty scene. The church was crowded each evening, many attending from other parishes. Rev. Father Schelly, C.S.S.R., of Saratoga, N.Y., preached the sermons.

The electric illuminations extend from Basin street at the Redemptorist Monastery, right around the church. The tower is beautifully illuminated with a large cross and other figures, about 1700 lights in all.

Next Sunday afternoon, St. Ann's Total Abstinence and Benefit Society will hold its monthly meeting. St. Ann's choir will render the same musical programme on Sunday next as arranged for to-day's feast. Rev. Father McPhail, C.S.S.R., is at present engaged in giving a retreat at Renfrew, Ont.

ST. GABRIEL'S PARISH.
The regular monthly meeting of the Temperance Society was held on Sunday after High Mass, and was largely attended. The question of arranging an annual excursion with the G.T.R. was left with a committee, of Messrs. O'Brien, Kane and Cuddihy, to report at the next meeting. A euchre party will be held in January if St. Gabriel's Hall can be obtained. On motion of Mr. James Burns, seconded by Mr. E. J. Colfer, it was decided to present the Juvenile Society with three collars for the officers. Mr. James Kane eulogized the members for the move in forming the juvenile society. "It was a move in the right direction," said Mr. Kane, "a move that will greatly benefit this society. We have worked hard at euchre parties and other affairs to put the society in a good financial standing, but we have done very little to increase it numerically." He hoped that every member would lend a hand to help the young society. The nomination of officers was then proceeded with, and the election will be held on the third Sunday of the month. Messrs. Noonan, Kane and Cuddihy were appointed auditors to examine the finances of the society for the past year.

The exercises in honor of the Immaculate Conception were largely attended each evening. Rev. Fathers O'Meara and Fahey had charge of the exercises. Rev. Father Fahey is working hard for the juvenile society, and has another large contingent ready for the first regular meeting on Sunday afternoon, Dec. 18th.

ST. ANTHONY'S PARISH.
On Wednesday evening the novena in honor of the Immaculate Conception opened. Rev. Father Thomas Heffernan preached the sermon. The church was crowded to the doors. The preacher was particularly well pleased to see such a large number of young men attend the exercises. On December 21st, the feast of St. Thomas, the children of the catechism classes will hold a matinee and concert in aid of St. Agnes Academy. Rev. Father Heffernan, director of

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the catechism classes, is preparing a very elaborate programme. Particulars will be given in next week's issue.

ST. MARY'S PARISH.
At the High Mass on Sunday, Rev. Father McDonald spoke on the necessity of having a Young Men's Society composed of men who would be in earnest, and willing to improve their time and talents. The feast of the Immaculate Conception is being celebrated to-day on an elaborate scale.

ST. MICHAEL'S PARISH.
The Forty Hours' devotion opened on Saturday morning at 9 o'clock. The pastor, Rev. Father Kiernan, sang High Mass. The altar was tastefully decorated with flowers and lights. Monday morning at nine o'clock the exercises closed with solemn High Mass, sung by Rev. Father Robert E. Callahan, after which there was a procession around the church.

The Triduum in honor of the Immaculate Conception opened on Monday evening. Rev. Father Kiernan preached the sermon. The Holy Rosary Sodality will soon be formed in the parish. The pastor is particularly well pleased with the young men of the parish, and a society will soon be formed. Rev. Father Ethelbert, O.F.M., will sing the solemn High Mass this morning, assisted by deacon and sub-deacon.

ST. AGNES PARISH.
On Dec. 13th, a euchre party in aid of the church fund will be held in the town hall. Refreshments will be served during the evening, and the Rev. Pastor is desirous of seeing his many friends attend.

GENERAL ITEMS OF INTEREST AROUND THE CITY.

Rev. Father Bryant, O.P., closed a successful retreat for the men at Notre Dame Church on Sunday evening.

On Saturday evening last, the acrobatic students of Laval University held their annual dinner at Place Viger Hotel.

The oyster supper given on Thursday evening at the Deaf and Dumb Institute in charge of the Sisters of Providence proved a great success.

The Board of Directors who had charge of the former Catholic High School have purchased a piece of property on Durocher street, and another High School is to be built.

On Thursday a very successful concert was held at Westmount in aid of St. Leo's Church. The hall was crowded, and the different numbers on the programme proved quite enjoyable.

St. Bridget's Night Refuge reports for the week ending Saturday, 3rd December: The following people had a night's lodging and breakfast, viz: Irish, 60; French, 25; English, 8; Scotch and other nationalities, 24. Total, 95.

On Sunday evening the retreat for the men of St. James parish closed, and on Monday evening the triduum opened. Rev. Father Gaston, O.F.M., was the preacher.

The annual meeting of the Press Association of the Province of Quebec was held in the Mechanic's Institute Friday afternoon. The election of officers resulted as follows: President—Mr. E. F. Slack, Gazette.

First Vice-President—Mr. Alex. M. Dewar, Herald. Second Vice-President—Mr. J. Miller McConnell, Star. Secretary-Treasurer—Mr. W. E. Burgess, Star.

Executive—Messrs. Geo. H. Porteous, Witness; Chas. Dingman, Herald; Arthur Lamallice, La Presse; B. K. Sandwell, Herald; T. T. Mitchell, Witness; C. J. Hanraff, Gazette; A. C. McPhoe, Toronto Globe; J. B. Trosider, Star.