

## II

# The Call of the Catholic Church in the West

The call of the Church in the West is a cry for help. Great indeed are the pressing needs of the Western Church, for numerous and various are the obstacles with which Catholics have to contend on the prairie and in the small towns.

The first barrier to surmount is **distance**. The very outlay of the country is to a great extent against the efficient working of a parish. The survey of the land has been made from a strictly economical point of view. Large farms,—vast wheat fields—are what the survey has had as final object. The social, educational, and religious elements of life are in the background. This renders church and school problems particularly difficult to solve as was insinuated in Dr. Foght's report of the educational survey in the Province of Saskatchewan (1918). This obstacle—let us not forget—will persist for years to come in Western Canada. According to competent authorities wheat growing, being essentially a large unit undertaking, demands extensive farming. This statement is very important for its consequences in Church organization are far-reaching.

The indiscriminate settling of the Catholic homesteaders here and there on the prairie, has also created for the Church one of its greatest difficulties. Living often 30, 40 and 50 miles from a Catholic chapel, these settlers drift away from the authority, teaching and sacraments of the Church. To form self-supporting parishes in the sparsely settled districts is often an impossibility.

To this barrier of immense distances are added for long months, **unfavourable climatic conditions**. The very severe cold, the high winds which have such a sweep on the boundless prairies, the terrific blizzards of the long winter months, will always remain a great obstacle to an intense Catholic life in rural parishes. Many Sundays, from December to March, it is a real impossibility to go to Church for those who live at any distance.