



PASTORAL LETTER

OF

His Grace the Archbishop of Toronto, on the Festival of St. Patrick

"Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments and how unsearchable are His ways!"—(Rom. xi.33.)

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To the Rev. Clergy, Religious Communities, and the Laity of our Diocese, Health and Benediction in the Lord.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN.—It was our agreeable duty some years ago to address to you a few words of admonition on the festival of St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland, and through Ireland, of many nations. In looking over those Pastoral Letters of 1871 and 1875, we have found that the advice then given, and the principal sentiments therein expressed, are well fitted to the present occasion, and we have thought that we could not do better than again address such good advice to you. The chief idea in our mind is, that the Irish people are an apostolic people, furnished by nature and by grace with all the aptitude of preserving their faith and of transmitting it to their posterity. We desire then, most earnestly to exhort Irish parents to transmit unstinted to their children this precious heritage; and at the same time we desire to urge upon the negligent, the necessity of quitting the vice and sins that stand in the way of the fulfilment of their sacred mission.

We address ourselves to the millions of exiled Irish people, (enough to constitute a respectable State) who will hail that day with joy and sadness, and in spirit revisit the hallowed homes, altars and churchyards, and the holy wells of the blessed land of their birth, or that of their forefathers, and pray and mourn, and say from the depths of their souls, "God bless Ireland! God preserve

the faith of her children, and her children's children,—exiles in many lands. God bless the loved island of Holy Pontiffs, learned Confessors, Monks, Hermits and Sacred Virgins, and of tens of thousands of Martyrs for that Faith preached to them by their great Apostle St. Patrick,—that land that God hath greatly blessed, but which man hath greatly cursed." It is a holy custom on the Festival of the blessed Patrick for the Irish people and their children to assist at the sacrifice of the Mass, receive Holy Communion, and to listen to sermons and exhortations to excite them to love their holy faith; to bless God for that most precious inheritance; to encourage them to frequent the Sacraments; and to transmit to their children, and thus to future generations, that faith for which millions of martyrs have shed their blood, which has gained for Ireland in latter times the glorious title of "the nation of martyrs," as in early days, she bore that of the "Island of Confessors and Virgins," that faith for which they have been deprived of their birthrights, their lands, their education,—have been starved, and hunted, and banished, and Oh! the glorious reward—they have exchanged the pains of earth for the joys of Heaven; for homes that perish they possess mansions of eternal bliss. On this Festival they will be taught to pray for their native land, that God may cease the oppression of the poor; and that He may sustain the Irish Clergy and Irish parents in their efforts to shield the rising generation against the most wily, determined, powerful and unscrupulous enemy of the Church of God—the Government of England (We say the Government of England, for millions of her people abhor the tyranny of the rulers of Ireland)—a Government which has endeavoured by Godless and

Protestant education to undermine, when it could not eradicate, the faith of the people; they will be taught to pray for their persecutors, that God may change their hearts and bring them to the true faith.

We feel it a consoling duty to address all our beloved people throughout the Diocese, the vast majority of whom are children of Ireland, upon this Festival of Ireland. Our object is two-fold; to encourage them to fulfil their sacred mission of preserving the deposit of the faith once delivered to the saints, and of transmitting it to their posterity; and secondly, to warn them against temptations which, though common to all nationalities, are particularly hurtful to a highly sensitive and religious people.

IRELAND'S DIVINE MISSION.

Ireland has a divine mission. In the admirable providence of God, He selects families and nations to be the agents of His holy will. He selected Abraham and his progeny to be His people, and Aaron and the tribe of Levi to be His priests. He has in a special way chosen the Caucasian or present European races to be the messengers of His word to the other nations of the earth. But from time to time He has been provoked to repudiate some of His choice. The Jewish people are no longer the people of God; Aaron is no longer His priest. Many nations of the earth, once bright with the lustre of the true faith, are, on account of their unworthiness and sins, no longer blessed with that divine light. But through His great mercy God has preserved for a sacred purpose one people inhabiting a little island in the western ocean. Then He has tried with the most bitter earthly afflictions. In His unsearchable providence, He has left them under the rule of