

SERMON BY FATHER BURKE.

"The House of God."

PREACHED AT THE DEDICATION OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH, LIMERICK.

After the last Gospel, Father Burke ascended the altar, and, taking his text from the 21st Book of Proverbs, said—May it please your lordship, dearly beloved brethren, we are assembled here to-day on an occasion of very great joy, to offer unto the Lord God the work of our hands, and to invite Him to come down from heaven and to remain and abide here in the midst of us, in order that this holy temple may truly be, in the language of Scripture, "A temple of God; not man; He shall dwell with them; they shall be His people; He in the very midst of them shall be their Sovereign." Every other day, in this strange and wonderful land of ours, the ceremony which we are called upon to witness is being performed again and again—the strangest sights that perhaps the world has ever witnessed, the uprising not of a nation only but of a race, with ardent eyes and strong, energetic arms, laboring to build up the house of God and to cover the land with temples dedicated to the Almighty. For this we can offer no apology except to say simply, "We labor thus because we cannot help it." It is necessary—it is indispensable—that if the Eternal God dwell with man that he should have upon this earth temples and palaces befitting His glory; speaking in their eloquent though silent voice of His greatness, and by the stateliness and solemnity of their beauty telling every one, on entering within their consecrated walls, to kneel down and adore and exclaim, "Truly, this is no other house than the house of God." I say we cannot help it, for it is God's eternal will that beauty and holiness should surround His house and be seen in it unto length of days; and so that you may know what that beauty is, and what that holiness is, I ask you to consider—first, the great temple of Almighty God, in which He wished to dwell and take up His abode for ever and ever. That temple was the sacred humanity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Our nature, dearly beloved brethren, our humanity, God took and made it His own dwelling-place, so that when our Divine Lord and Redeemer walked a true man among men He dwelt in the fulness of God—eternal Divinity proper. He was God as well as Man. He spoke. It was the voice of God; He wept—they were the tears of God; He bled; it was the blood of God. He was God and ever shall be God—the eternal, blessed, adored, and honored God. Now, if you know what are the beauties that belong to the house of God, consider our Divine Lord, the loving Temple of that eternal Divinity, in whom dwelleth the fulness of that Divinity proper. First of all, let us meditate upon it, and surely to think upon it with loving and lingering thoughts is not only the privilege but the necessity of every man who believes that God came down from heaven, incarnated by the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, and was made man for purposes of divine love. Contemplate that God and we learn to love Him; we grow strong and fervent in His love, so that it would seem to be the very necessity of the faith within us. To Him, therefore, we turn our eyes, and contemplate the grand figure of our Lord Jesus Christ. The first great element that we behold in Him is the wonderful unity—unity of man astounding. God, as you know, is essential unity, not the unity of one thing made up of many parts, but a unity made up with the exclusion of all parts and all composition. It is the nature of God, therefore, that God should never begin to exist, because the existence of things which did not exist before involves the union of two things—namely, the previous nothingness and present existence; but God, because of His simple nature, must of necessity be eternal. Then when God became man our Divine Lord in His most sacred heart and Divine person, put forth the unity of God before the eyes of man. There were two things in the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ—namely, human nature and Divine, and when God purposed to take to Himself human nature and add it to Himself, He might, if He so willed it, have something superadded to Him for certain purposes, simply joined to Him by a kind of moral union, till He had accomplished the purposes of our Divine Redeemer, and then put it away from Him. Thus we read how angels in olden times took the form of the human body for some certain purpose, to perform some certain duty of their Master. An angel spoke to Tobias, we are told, and we are also informed in Holy Scripture that an angel in the form of a youth spoke to Abraham, and after fulfilling his mission he vanished—vanished into the air—and returned to the elements out of which, for the time, he had coagulated. When God became man he could have taken that body and borne it for the time till he had accomplished our redemption, but such an incarnation, if incarnation it might be called, would not represent the beauty of God in our Divine Lord.—Therefore, when the Son of God became man and took to Himself a human body out of the most adorable, immaculate, and blessed Virgin Mary, He created a human soul in that body, and gave it life; and at the very moment that that human body was conceived and that human soul created, that moment the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity took that human soul, took that nature, assumed it unto Himself, gathered it unto His own Divine personality, so that, as St. Augustine strongly observes, "out of the three became one." The human body, the human soul became Jesus Christ our Lord. He would not take the human personality or individuality, but substituted a Divine personality the Second Person of the most adorable Trinity, who became man of the Virgin Mary. Behold, then, how beautiful is the unity of two things in one Divine God! How grand in the integrity of one God—in three Persons were joined, as it were, the formation of one Redeemer. This is a grand principle of our Lord. Let us consider, dearly beloved, what follows from this wonderful union of two things in one.—The person who suffered, the person who prayed, the person who wept was the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity; and in Him human nature was infinitely glorified, infinitely sanctified by such personal union. How well was this recognized by some denied by others: "Whom do you think I am?" says our Lord, speaking to his apostles, and they answered—"Some say Thou art John the Baptist, some say Thou art Elias, and some that Thou art the Prophet Jeremiah." "Whom do you say I am?" said the Lord, and Peter cried out, "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God."

How holy he was! He labored all day, the Evangelists tell us, and then when night came on, and other laborers lay down to rest, He wended His steps weary to the mountain side, and went into the back shades of the olive grove, and spent the night in prayer with God. How wonderful was that prayer that for forty days and forty nights unbroken was continued in that desert place! The sun rose and set in the heavens, night came on, and the stars came out in their places in the firmament, but He never closed an eye for a moment's rest, never tasted food or drink, but persevered in His prayer. And how humble He was! He told us, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." "I seek not My glory, but the glory of Him who sent Me." How obedient was He who said, "My work is to do the will of the Father who sent Me." Sanctity not only dwelt in Him, but infinite sanctity was poured from Him in the form of Divine grace. Sanctity went out from Him. Whatever He touched He made holy; whatever He looked upon He made holy; whatever He permitted to approach Him was sanctified. He cared not how base the sinner might be—the reproach of the whole world, as Magdalen was, the very existence, the very presence of whom was sin itself—she who was the reproach of a whole city, the woman whom, when passing in the streets, the Pharisees gathered up their robes and told her to begone—even this woman was made pure by the sight of the Son of God. This woman, the very sight of whom was sin, the willful thoughts of whom was sin—she cast herself at the feet of Jesus Christ, crawling like a guilty reptile, as she was, not daring to look up. She weeps, and the moment those tears drop—the moment that her lips are pressed to His feet, that moment she becomes sanctified, and rising from His feet she goes forth a sign of God's power and sanctity and a monument of all that God can do upon this earth. She received one glance of His eye and became sanctified. The next was His power, His strength. Oh! how strong He was!—He knew no fear. The Pharisees themselves attested this by saying to Him, "We know that there is no respect for person with Thee, and that Thou wilt not respect the person of any man." He knew no fear, for all men were afraid of Him. Then, when they came to take Him prisoner, they came in a multitude; they came, as He Himself tells us, as if they were going forth to capture some mighty chieftain or robber bandit, as if they had to deal with some mighty armed man, and then when they approached He only looked at them; and St. John tells us that they twice fell back before Him. How powerful He was in the strength of His Divine potency! His scourging would have killed any other man, but He sustained it. How powerful He was in the endurance of these three terrible hours whilst His heart was slowly breaking on the cross. Behold our God in death as the first great temple of the first great living tabernacle. We are assured that Christ is to be with the Church, and that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Beauty is to belong to her. He asked who was His spouse of whom the Scriptures spoke? Those who were present in his congregation that day, and who did not agree with the doctrine of the Catholic Church he asked, earnestly and respectfully, who was this spouse? Catholics believed that it was the Holy Catholic Church, and if he were asked why do they believe this? he answered—because the inspired Apostle St. Paul expressly tells that Christ our Lord looks upon the Church as His spouse, that the Church has all the beauty which was promised to the spouse, that the Church is our Divine redemption, that it is the very spouse of His love—his bride.—Out of this union of Christ and His Church the Apostle draws the sanctity of Christian marriage, and says, "Man, love your wife as Christ loved." Was there anything more clearly pointed out in the Scriptures, that the evident purpose, the clear design of the Son of God, was to found a Church? He was constantly speaking of it and he refers to it generally as the Kingdom of Heaven. He likes, however, to compare it to many things. He likens it to a candle set in a candlestick, so that it can illuminate the whole house. And lest any person may be scandalized, he says the kingdom of heaven is like a net cast into the sea, and taking living fish. "Thou art Peter," said he, "and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He said he should send them the Spirit of Truth, and then he promised to be with them all days, even to the consummation of the world.—Could anything be clearer; could anything be stronger than these words? There was one thing necessary—namely, the confirmation of these words of Scripture. Was she that thing of beauty, of divine beauty, of supernatural beauty which she claimed? They should examine. The Catholic Church was a consummation on earth of the presence of the Spirit, and the mission of Jesus Christ himself. It was the consummation of His presence, for he himself stated, "I will remain all days with you." It was the consummation of his mission, for he came to enlighten, for he told his apostles to go forth and let all men see them, and seeing they should glorify them.

The strength of grace was death; it triumphed over death, it triumphed upon it, and it fulfilled the words of the prophet, "Oh, death, where is thy sting; oh, grave where is thy victory?" To the apostles, Christ promised that the gates of hell should never prevail against the Church; and, therefore, if they never were to prevail, she should remain in the supernatural condition, while everything around her, by the very action of pride, was crumbling into dust. Consider, then, the great beauty of unity, that first great attribute shone over us from our divine Lord. The Church was one, essentially one; her faith was the same in all places. It had been his privilege, unworthy as he was, to preach in more than one language, to more than one people, in more than one clime, and over the whole face of the globe his message would sound; His words were unchanged, and they fell upon ears that were familiar to the sound, for they had never heard any other message. Now, mark, it did not follow that because that message was one and unchanged, that therefore it was true. It did not follow, but he would tell them what followed. It followed of necessity that if it changed it would not be true; its truth may not be proved for its change. If it was not one it would not be true. If one priest in that parish preached one doctrine, and another priest in a neighboring parish, or a neighboring county, or a neighboring country—nay, a neighboring world—certain it was that some of them must be saying what is false.—Therefore, if unity is not the proof of truth, diversity is the absolute proof of falsehood. The Catholic Church was one all the world over. The same message to all her people; she is one in unity and love. Her members should be sanctified, for the moment they lost divine grace by mortal sin, that moment they ceased to belong to the Catholic Church, and the fallen sinner could not return into the fold without being again sanctified. But the very wish to be again within the fold showed that the sinner was repentant, and she was then willing to receive him back. But they might ask him, could not a man submit to the Catholic Church and belong to her not only in body and soul and spirit, and receive her sacraments and approach her altars, and yet not be required to separate so absolutely from sin?—Could not God make some little compromise, they were so weak? Would not the Church consider their weakness, and permit at least some little sin? If the Catholic Church would do that it would prosper more among men, but she would cease to be the Church of the living God. Oh! if that could have been done; if that little compromise could have been effected when the English monarch only asked for a little indulgence, he would have remained Catholic. He would defend the faith; he would write books in defense of the Catholic faith; he

would send out his fleets and armies to fight for it, if it would only allow him a little indulgence because he was weak. But the Spouse of God cried out, "Non possumus"—it cannot be done, it must not be done. And then when he lifted his hand and smote the Church in the face, she answered and said, "You may strip me of my possessions, you may rob me of my wealth, you may drive me from the country, you may shed my blood; I know how to suffer, I know how to die. I know how to be a beggar, to be poor and to be impoverished; but it is my fate and my destiny that I don't know how to compromise with sin," so holy is the Catholic Church. The next attribute was power and strength. How wonderful! The Jews thought that they could kill Him, but they never could have killed Him if He of His own free will had not consented to die. He rose from the tomb and in His resurrection He proved that He was God, essentially and eternally. He set upon His Church the seal of His Spouse. To it He said, "Arise, go forth, speak every word that I shall put upon thy lips. The nations shall rise against thee, the princes shall rise against thee, for I have made thee to be as a wall of brass. Nothing can resist thee, and thou shalt break down and destroy all thine enemies." The self-same prophesy nearly 1,900 years ago was spoken, and never since that day of her foundation to the present hour had the Church one hour's existence without having constantly to oppose some one. For 300 years she shed her blood in every land; existed to produce only martyrs. Every man and every woman who embraced Catholicity was told plainly and distinctly that they were going to a certain and terrible death. Three hundred years more and the whole world was Arian, and the Church once more stood up and bled for her beloved. Then came the history of her heresies, and the work of contradiction was carried on with occasional gleams of prosperity. Three hundred years ago Martin Luther commenced his heresy, and the Church lost half her children. She could not keep them; they would not stay unless she would consent to acknowledge some things that she said were wrong. She could not say it. The Church could not unsway one tittle or one iota that she ever taught, because she came from God. How could the Church unsway anything that she said? She did not invent a dogma, and did not make a dogma. The Catholic Church had no power to make a dogma. But the Catholic Church was the mind of God, and would anybody ask her to contradict anything that God had said? She could not do it. He would now ask them to come nearer home on this important line of thought. In that Church dwelt the fullness of Christ's divinity. Jesus Christ was there upon that altar as real, as truly, as substantial, as consciously as He was in the Blessed Virgin's arms on that Christmas morning in Bethlehem, or when he hung on the cross. The first beauty of the place is that it was the house of God. The patriarch of old was so terrified when he was brought face to face with the divine presence that he knelt down and said, "Truly this is no other than the house of God." What would that patriarch have said if he had been permitted to enter into the temple of Jerusalem that morn when Mary entered there looking for her child. For three days she sought him, and at the end of three days she, seeking him, came into the temple; but as she crossed the threshold she caught the echo of the child's voice, and the whispers of that sound passed from arch to arch. She entered and she saw God in His own dwelling; she heard God speaking in His own house. First of all she knelt down and adored Him, and then she took Him in her hands and brought Him home. But if the patriarch who trembled when angels only appeared before him, if he had seen the face of the Lord Himself, would he not have bowed down and exclaimed, "Woe is me, for I have seen the Lord." It is true that Mary beheld the face of God disguised under a little child, but she did not fail to know that His voice was the voice of God, although His lips seemed to be the lips of an infant child. So, in the same way, though those who would come to this Church would see only the appearance in bread and wine, yet they would discover the real and true presence of Christ under the hidden form in which He had chosen to appear among His people. The truth of God was the second main attribute of Jesus Christ. The voice resounding within these walls for generations and generations to come would be the voice of a man so bound by the dogma of that Church that one word must never come from these lips except the word of God, the revealed truth; therefore that law must remain in the Catholic Church. As St. Augustine said of baptism, so did he say now of the preaching of the word of God. Therefore, as their fathers heard that word fifteen hundred years ago from Patrick and from Patrick's disciples—and they heard that same unchanged word that day—so after a thousand years, if the world lasted so long, the preacher standing within those walls would preach to their posterity the same word he was now preaching. That word would not change because Peter and Paul must pass away, and James and John must die, but He whose voice would resound there would speak the same. The sanctity of God, as well as the light of God, would dwell in that place, and here would be opened the fountains of water welling forth eternal life. The sinner coming in there bearing the burden of his sins, like Magdalen, would receive pardon and would go forth a new man. What wonder then that they should rejoice at this new coming down of Jesus Christ on the earth? As the shepherds rejoiced when the light of angelic wings flashed over the stable of Bethlehem, so great would be the joy of them here when future generations would be sanctified and enlightened with living bread. But there was another cause of joy, and of legitimate joy to them Catholics, and it was a joy they would be surprised perhaps to hear, in which he would call upon every high-minded, genial, generous, hearty man, even not a Catholic, in that land to share in, and it was this: that Church was a monument in its beauty, in its strength, of a race and of a faith that had never died. Fifteen hundred years ago Ireland was converted. She had been Pagan; she became Christian. She at once took her place amongst the nations in the very front, in the foremost rank of all that was highest in intellect on the face of the earth. The nations beheld her, and in their amazement they called her the Green Western Isle, the mother, and the land of saints and scholars—Insula Sanctorum. In that they enshrined in it the genius, and the form of their language, and their national character. Persecution came and burst over Catholic Ireland, but the Catholic Church had entwined itself round her people, and had struck its roots so deep into their souls, that, like the forest oak, whose roots were twined round the rocks down deep in the earth, and whose head could defy the storm and remain firm when every other sapling was carried away, there it remained the sole remnant of the ruin. So in that day of persecution the storm burst over the head of Ireland's Catholicity, but the truth could not be swept away, for its roots were entwined round the hearts of the Irish race. There was but one way to destroy Catholic Ireland, and that was to destroy it altogether. Now, he asked, was not this something for them to glory in? Was it not something for them to stand firm and to hold aloft the standard of the Crucified when there were so many whose hands had let it fall in the blood-stained dust? Was it not something to be faithful to their convictions? Was it not for non-Catholics in subject for many pride and congratulation in common with Catholics? Those who were non-Catholics would despise Catholics if they would turn their backs on their Church like dastardly cowards. They would despise such. Their fathers gave up land, liberty, and life, rather than abandon God. They went out, died, and went up to heaven, and there wrote Ireland's name in letters of gold.

After an earnest appeal on behalf of the charity which they had met to contribute to, Father Burke concluded by asking the congregation to contribute liberally, and relieve the zealous pastor of the debt which still existed against the Church, which could not be called the Church of God so long as any debt remained against it.

IRISH INTELLIGENCE.

On Tuesday, the Archbishop of Tuam, accompanied by the Very Rev. Thomas McHale, of the Irish College, Paris, and the Rev. Richard Prendergast, C. A., Tuam, visited the parish of Annaghdown. His Grace administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to 200 children. The sermon on the occasion was preached by the Very Rev. Thomas McDonagh, P. P., Cummor. On Wednesday the Archbishop went from the monastery at Annaghdown to Lackagh, accompanied by the Rev. Dr. McHale and the respected parish priest of Annaghdown, Rev. Peter Waldman. In the parish of Lackagh His Grace administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to about a hundred children and adults. In the parish his Grace and over twenty rev. clergymen received the fullest measure of attention and hospitable care from the respected pastor, Rev. John McGough. The sermon on the occasion was preached by the Very Rev. Canon Bourke, P. P. During next week his Grace will be administering Confirmation in the parish of Clonberne, and adjacent districts.—Tuam News.

The Christian Brothers from New York arrived in this city a few days ago and are enjoying the hospitality of Alderman Patrick Hogan, where they will remain a few days before leaving Limerick.—Their object in visiting Ireland is to extend an invitation and afford an opportunity on the most favourable terms to young men to become missionaries and members of their Institute in America. The constantly increasing requirements in the extensive field of labor laid open to their missionary zeal in the United States and other regions, have induced the Superiors to depute its members to visit Ireland. The warm reception they receive everywhere from the clergy and our people evidences and holds out expectations that many young men will be found to enlist themselves under the banner of the Cross preferably to wandering to different shores where innumerable difficulties and hardships await them. The great question of the day—the vital one—religious education, not only in this country, but in America, where the children of our race and faith are endangered by the devouring elements of a progressive age. Shall we not take a holy vengeance and do all we possibly can to stem the torrent as it moves along? This is the battle for which the Church is contending, the education of the rising generation, and upon which her hopes are directed. Education is strength, and when attained, the victory will be certain. Those who may desire further information upon the subject may address themselves to the Rev. Brother Jasper, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny, this being the central place of communication. The movement is one which has our warmest sym-