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Prevailing Priest Famine in United States.

(From an article by Rev. P. A. Doyle, C.S.P., in the Ecclesiastical Review.)

A Bishop is quoted as saying recently that "the Church in the United States could put to work fifteen hundred priests to-morrow if she had them." This statement has gone the round of the papers; and if there can be even a shadow of truth in it, it indicates an alarming state of affairs and it portends much injury to existing Church activities and blights many of the hopes of progress in the immediate future.

We are accustomed to listen to oft-repeated declarations of the hope of wonderful Church progress during the coming decade of years, and there are many grounds on which these declarations may be based. Even the most dull-eyed can see that everywhere throughout the country there is an unwonted stirring of missionary activities. Converts are coming into the Church in extraordinary numbers. The streams of immigration that have been flowing toward these shores for many generations are growing in volume and are bringing during the last decade even a higher percentage of Catholics. There is apparent in all parts of the Church a more vigorous activity. Parishes are being divided and new ones flourish in a few years even beyond the proportions of the parent parish. School activities are intensified and are reaching out for higher efficiency. On all sides there are many evidences that the huge organization of the Church is stirring with un-wonted activity.

On the heels of this awakening comes the statement of one who should know, that there is a prevailing priest famine. The bishops cannot meet the demands that are made on them for skilled laborers in the vineyard. The year's crop is hanging on the vines and there are not workmen enough to gather it. Nor are there any even standing in the marketplace idle. Everyone who is available is at work; and the cry is for more priests and there is none to be found. The condition we find ourselves in is very much akin to the prevailing labor famine in the agricultural districts, with bumper crops withering in the field and no farm laborers to gather them in.

It is an interesting line of research to discover how far the real condition of affairs in the Church in this country bears out the bishop's statement of the actual demand for "fifteen hundred priests." In the beginning one is very much inclined to treat the statement as one of the many exaggerations that one meets with in current literature, and in his own mind at least to say that it is not possible that at the very time when Providence is preparing a glorious future for the Church, its realizations should miscarry because a sufficient supply of priests is not avail-

able for the work. The making of a priest is conditioned to a large extent on the vocation he has from on high. It seems capricious in the divine plan to give with one hand a bountiful harvest and to nullify its usefulness by withholding on the other hand the laborers to gather it. Still a closer consideration of conditions makes the fact of the dearth of priests painfully apparent. Let us lay bare some of these conditions.

It has fallen to my lot to be obliged to present to the President some suitable candidates for the extra chaplaincies in the Army that he assigned to the Catholic Church. He is persuaded of the efficiency of the Catholic priest among the enlisted men in the Army and the Navy, and when the new Coast Artillery Bill made a number of new vacancies, he gave five to the Catholic Church. A circular letter was sent to all the bishops asking them to designate some suitable priests for the Army chaplaincies. The replies threw a flood of light on the existing state of affairs. Says one: "I should be most happy, but I have actual need of twenty priests for diocesan work." Says another: "I could put forty priests to work immediately, if I had them." A third writes: "I have lost many priests by death in the past year and am now short. Why not appeal to the New England dioceses?" The New England dioceses replied in a similar way to the appeal, though the evil does not appear to be so acute there as it is in other parts. Even in the older dioceses, where there had been a perfected organization for many decades; where the parish school is well established, and Sisters and Brothers have been doing their good work for some generations of scholars, and where growth is not so vigorous and consequently the demand for priests not so urgent, yet even in these well-established places the same complaint prevails—not enough priests to fill existing vacancies. "We need fifteen priests for diocesan work, and cannot spare any for the Army," writes an archbishop. There are ninety dioceses in the country, and an average need of fifteen priests in each diocese will easily make up the fifteen hundred that are demanded by the necessities of the entire country. Still other experiences along the same lines may serve to persuade one that the bishop who made the first statement about the fifteen hundred was not far astray.

Since the inception of the Non-Catholic Mission Movement the chief problem has been to supply the equipped missionary. There have been found any one to antagonize the underlying principles of the movement; that the non-Catholics ought to have Catholic truth presented to him. Nor has there been any one found to dispute the fact that converts may be had for the making. Nor has there been found any one to say that the movement is not timely; but the bishops do say that, "We are eager to institute diocesan Mission bands, but we have no priests. We want to send some one to the Mission House, but even before a class of

young priests are ordained their services are pre-empted in parish work." So thousands of non-Catholics must go without a Missionary. Thousands of converts must be stalled on their way to the Church because there is none to remove their prejudices or to instruct them in Catholic doctrine. So, too, with every other aggressive work in the Church. It is our shame that there are 10 American priests in the foreign field. Every other nationality is represented; but the American is conspicuous by his absence. The American priest, owing to the pre-eminence of America in the councils of the nations, would succeed where a Frenchman or a Spaniard would fail. Yet none can be spared. American Protestantism is in evidence all through the East, so much so that the Oriental is persuaded that America is Protestant and that a Catholic American would be an anomaly. In the Canal Zone there are 25,000 Catholics sending a Macedonian cry to the bishops in the United States to provide priests to minister to their spiritual wants, but there is none to send. Thousands of Catholics in government service are compelled to forgo the comforts of their religion and many of them run the risk of even dying without the rites of the Church.

In view of these many facts the prevailing priest famine looms up as an awful reality and is big with calamitous consequences if some effective measures are not immediately adopted to counteract it.

What are the principal causes of this dearth of priests? Some may be told; others may not, because probably they would reflect too much on those to whom is entrusted the care of the Churches. Among the foremost of these causes is the wonderful growth of the Church. The growth comes from the increased number of immigrants, the natural increase of the many millions who are now within the Church, and finally the yearly increase by accessions through conversions. Probably a million souls are added to the Church every year from these sources; and to care for this added million, a thousand new priests must be provided every year.

Another reason for this priest famine is, let us be candid, because there are not sufficient efforts made to cultivate vocations. Most Catholics think that vocations will grow of themselves. Their idea of a vocation is, that it is a sort of an aerolite that descends from the Heavens, a divine franchise given to select souls. If one is so fortunate as to have it, it will assert itself, and in spite of difficulties or obstacles it will attain realization. On account of this idea mothers ordinarily will not urge their boys to study for the priesthood lest perchance they may interfere with God's designs. Religious in the parish school leave the question of vocation to settle itself. Priests may afford the boys opportunity of an education; but if for some minor cause the boy drops out before his course is finished, they attribute his failure to go through to "a lack of vocation," when nine times out of ten the real cause is lack of stamina or of ambition to succeed. In the preparatory colleges there is very often a positive effort made to discourage boys, on the plea that it is necessary to "weed out." Instead of cherishing "the holy desire in the boy's heart to devote his life to God," the Director seeks the chance to dismiss the lad if he be caught in the violation of a school regulation. The result of such a regime is that if a boy does go through to the Seminary it is in spite of a strong opposition. Often the high-spirited boys are the ones to be broken, while dull mediocrity plods along and very often gets through.

There are few vocations from families of wealth and culture. The opportunities of the commercial life lure the boys away. They are brought up in luxury, and they have no heart for sacrifices of a priest's life. Moreover, the strong old faith that esteems a vocation in a family as a divine blessing, and is infinitely grateful for such a family grace, seems no longer to exist in the heart of the mothers of wealth. Time was when every family paid its tribute of a boy and a girl to the inner courts of the Lord. Kings and queens were glad to step down from their thrones and follow the steps of the Crucified One. We nowadays often hear from mothers the complaint that "priests are such ordinary men; they have no culture." Such mothers ordinarily stand in the way of their own children going to the priesthood.

A broad-minded outlook over the work of the Church leads an observing bishop to fill up the ranks of the clergy. He sees the opportunities that are before the Church and he banks on the future. A goodly supply of priests in this country will create work. Ordinarily priests in this country are not inclined to sit down in idleness. They are sure to find avenues of usefulness, especially in this so-called "age of opportunity," the personal initiative. The system that bids a young priest do just what he is told and no more is not the best system to develop one's energies; sometimes indeed it results in paralyzes of the talents as well as the ambitions of a zealous young priest. It is rarely heard of that a priest is overworked, but it is true that many a one does not fulfill the promises of a young life, and the principal reason is idleness. An old Jesuit Father recently said that in his opinion idleness works more injury than anything else.

There is undoubtedly a great work before the Church in this country, and a large supply of priests alone can compass it! To dominate America means the conquest of the English-speaking races. To make the United States dominantly Catholic means that the broad name of Catholicity will be written over the Western Hemisphere. The possibility of this taking place at a time when the Church is losing her grip on some of the countries of the old world seems to be a part of that law of compensation that has blessed the progress of the Church through history. In the sixteenth century, when the northern races revolted against her authority, their defection was more than counterbalanced by the marvelous conquests made by the missionaries in the newly-discovered countries of the New World. In the twentieth century, when some races are falling away, it may be rightly presumed that the historical compensations are to be made by a conversion of a large part of the American

people to the Catholic Church. Already with the little effort that has been made, 25,000 are annually brought into the Church. What would happen if the working force of the Church were multiplied ten-fold? This great providential work seems about to be frustrated by an avoidable cause, that is the scarcity of priests.

Nationality

(By Thomas Davis.)

A nation's voice; a nation's voice—
It is a solemn thing!
It bids the bondage-sick rejoice—
'Tis stronger than a king.
'Tis the light of many stars,
The sound of many waves;
Which brightly look through prison bars,
And sweetly sound in caves.
Yet is it noblest, godliest known,
When righteous triumph swells its tone.

A nation's flag; a nation's flag—
It wickedly unrolled,
May foes in adverse battle drag
Its every fold from fold,
But, in the cause of Liberty,
Guard it 'gainst Earth and Hell;
Guard it till Death or Victory—
Look you, you guard it well!
No saint of king has tomb so proud,
As he whose flag becomes his shroud.

A nation's right, a nation's right—
God gave it, and gave, too,
A nation's sword, a nation's might,
Danger to guard it through.
'Tis freedom from a foreign yoke,
'Tis just and equal laws,
Which deal unto the humblest folk,
As in a noble's cause.
On nations fixed in right and truth,
God would bestow eternal youth.

May Ireland's voice be ever heard
Amid the world's applause!
And never be her flagstaff stirred
But in an honest cause!
May Freedom be her very breath,
Be Justice ever dear;
And never an ennobled death
May 'son of Ireland' fear!
So the Lord God will ever smile,
With guardian grace upon our isle.

Spreading the Faith in China

From the bi-monthly bulletin issued by the Missions Etrangères, the editor of the Catholic Watchman, of Madras, India, translates the following account of a recent martyrdom, furnished by the Rev. Father de Guelblant, a missionary attached to the Vicariate of South Szechuan, an extreme western province of China, where foreigners are still persecuted and in constant dread of being put to death. Within the missionary's jurisdiction are mountains inhabited by the Lolos, a dark-skinned people, with whom the Chinese, it would seem, are often at war. In an interval of peace, the chief of a Lolo tribe had permitted his brother, a boy of fifteen, named Lao, to attend a mission school established for Chinese children. The Father continues:

"Every time I appeared Lao would ask me for baptism, which I felt I could hardly give him, knowing that as he grew up there would be little chance, humanly speaking, of his persevering as a Christian. Everyone loved him. He spoke equally well Chinese and Lolo, so I called him to my village last May to assist in preparing a Lolo vocabulary.

"That summer some Lolo pirates, living along the banks of the Ya-long River, sacked the home of a rich Chinese family. The mandarin of Ho-si found it easier to vent his wrath on the innocent brother of my young assistant than to attack a ferocious tribe, so the former was apprehended and thrown into prison. His mother and other relatives protested against the cruelty, and tried to have him released by the Chinese legal processes, but to no avail. The prefect was delighted to have a Lolo in his power, his hatred of these Blacks being intense.

"Soon the whole mountain side was in a ferment. The Lolo tribe took up arms; and the Chinese mandarin, becoming frightened, conceived

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the idea of using Lao as an ambassador of peace, since he could speak both languages. The boy, thinking only of his brother's release, readily assented.

"At the outset things looked promising; the Lolos, who had camped around the city, retired some distance, but refused to lay down their arms while their chief was in prison. Negotiations continued and Lao quietly went among his people to interview them. In the meantime the Mandarin Kin received from neighboring Chinese villages an offer to join him in attacking the Lolos. He accepted, and five hundred fully armed Chinese lined up for battle against the Lolos on the mountain side.

"Lao, unarmed and smiling as usual, returned to continue his services as peacemaker, when immediately the pent-up fury of all the Chinese was vented on the poor boy, who was simply covered with knife wounds. Amid cries of triumph, his assailants threw him, gasping, before the door of the Ya-men, the mandarin's residence.

it all his terrible pains; and, during the short interval of quiet following the mandarin's efforts, I called to some around me and said: 'Take this child and care for him. It will be only for a day at most.' They promised to do as I asked. But as soon as the crowd realized that the guard whom I had directed were assisting him, they made a furious charge, and in less than fifteen minutes had crushed out the little sufferer's life. I thanked God, Lao's recovery was impossible, and his agony was heart-rending.

"Fortified by the triple baptism of desire, blood, and the Holy Sacrament, the boy was an expiatory victim for the crimes of his race; and I shall not be surprised to see many conversions among those terrible Blacks. Lao was the first of his people to die a Christian."

A Canadian Priest in China

"If I ever build a brick chapel in this place," writes Rev. Father J. M. Fraser, of Ning-po, China, who went from Canada to the Oriental field, "I will dedicate it to Our Lady of Lourdes, for the neighborhood here bears a resemblance to the country about Lourdes. But I am talking like the maid with the pail of milk who, while dreaming of what she would buy with the proceeds of the sale of milk, upset and lost it all. I must be satisfied, for the present, with what I can do, without building air castles (or rather chapels). Next month in the town of Pih I shall, please God, have a small temporary church with four sides to it. I shall no longer have to say Mass there in the open air."—Exchange.

St. Mark's Campanile

The rebuilding of the famous Campanile of Venice has made rapid progress during the last twelve months, and has now attained a height of 150 feet. By the end of 1909 the main portion of the tower will be finished, and the marble loggia which will surmount the column, will be begun. This time ample precautions have been taken to insure the strength and stability of the new Campanile. The old pilework was found to be in an excellent state of preservation. A gilded statue of the Virgin in terra cotta, which was a special object of veneration, and which was reduced to fragments in the falling of the tower, has been cleverly put together again by experts, and will occupy relatively its former position. It is stated that when the tower is completed it will be impossible to detect any difference between it and the old one. The very bells will ring with precisely the same pitch and tonality as by a fortunate coincidence the maestro Perosi, a short time before the collapse, had noted their intonation.

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