

PRISONER OF FIFTY YEARS

It is safe to say that the average American Catholic does not understand the "Roman Question." And because he does not understand, he is not very intensely interested. Yet he ought to be interested. The Holy See is looking more and more each year to the Catholics of the United States for the moral and financial support that it has been deprived of in other countries.

This year of 1920 brings around an anniversary that should be of the greatest interest to American Catholics, and we should also endeavor to understand its import. Usually anniversaries are occasions for joyful celebrations. But there is nothing in this one to cause joy; it really makes sadness grow deeper.

Over that large expanse of territory, the Bishops of Rome ruled as kings, and their right to this property was founded on a stronger title than that possessed by any king in Europe. Not by robbing others, not by armed conquest, but chiefly by donation and gift, the Popes had received this territory from the times of Pepin and Charlemagne onwards.

But the people of Piedmont were determined to unite Italy into a grand nation, with Rome as the capital. At this time (about the year 1848) was composed of a number of small principalities, such as the kingdom of Naples, the Duchies of Milan and Parma, etc. Venice was in the hands of the Austrians, and Rome, with its environs, was usually guarded by French troops until the breaking out of the Franco-Prussian war.

Bishop of Rome, is the successor of St. Peter. The conclusion, therefore, must be that our Faith teaches us that the Bishop of Rome by Divine choice must rule the Church freely and independently, and that we owe him childlike obedience. It is certain therefore, that it is the holy will of God that the freedom of the Pope be completely secured, so that unhampered in any way he may lead the whole flock of Christ in spiritual matters.

The Pope must then be free as head of the Church. Since the Bishop of Rome has received this right from God, he has a right to determine the means that he deems necessary in order to exercise his sublime office most fully and without molestation of any kind.

Common sense must tell any one that the Pope is only really free and independent in Rome, when he is absolutely not subject to any one else. Moreover, the same common sense tells us that freedom and independence are best had in Rome when the Pope himself is the temporal ruler of Rome.

Furthermore, events of the last fifty years have proved conclusively that the Pope is not free in Rome to exercise his sublime office in a way befitting his great dignity and importance. He is really dependent upon governmental measures and upon the whims of ministers of State, houses of Parliament and the crowd.

In a word, he is really at the mercy and good pleasure of others. Finally, every one of the Popes who have shared the prison house of the Vatican has told us clearly and positively that the Temporal Power of the Pope is necessary at present in order that they may, freely and independently, of any power or secular prince, rule and guide the entire Church. Our present gloriously reigning Holy Father expressed the same idea in his war encyclical of November 1, 1914.

Can a solution be given for this most difficult question? As loyal sons of the Church, we must await her solution. The Pope, as the chief one involved, must be consulted. There is exactly where the mistake has occurred in every attempt made to solve the problem. The Italian Government has drawn up laws, has formulated plans about this vexed question, but always the Pope, who is the one most vitally affected, has been ignored. He has not been consulted; he has not been requested to give his opinion. He has been treated not as the greatest ruler in the world, for such he is, but more like a deposed ruler who is to get something through the mercy of the conqueror.

First, the Pope must be recognized as a supra-national sovereign, with the right to be independent of every earthly ruler, not because of any concession on the part of a government, but because his exalted office requires such freedom. Secondly, the right to have of his disposition all the means necessary for the work of his great ministry, independent of any earthly authority, must be acknowledged. Thirdly, the independence of the person of the Pope and his official acts, his place of residence and his office, together with the independence of a portion of territory in keeping with the dignity of a sovereign and not of a deposed ruler. This independence must be considered not as a gift from some earthly government, but as a right inherent in the Pope's office.

Very well, but what do we but too often see? A person comes into church, makes some sort of downward jerk, enters a pew, makes a movement with the right hand toward the forehead, then one as though trying to brush a fly from off his nose—and the operation of making the sign of the cross is completed! Or again a squirm in the air is made with a motion toward the breast which one might easily imagine was intended to brush off another fly or atom of dust.

Whatsoever anything is said during this series of spasmodic movements, God alone knows. Certainly the idea that there is much reverence in the operation. Now, this should not be so. In blessing one's self one must or should think of what he is doing.

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CRITICISING THE PRIEST

To the question, "Why is it that some Catholics would rather criticise the priest than pray for him?" the following excellent answer is given by Father P. J. Dennis of St. Louis in his News Boys' Journal:

Reverence for the priestly office and for the priest is an inborn instinct in real Catholics. In some of the saints this reverence has been so great that they never dared to receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

Francis of Assisi, a genius of sanctity, declared himself unworthy of so great an honor. The Council of Trent says this nowhere, on earth may be found a power equal to the power possessed by the humblest priest of consecrating the Body of Christ and of remitting sins.

And yet— "Father So-and-So is stuck up, or Father So-and-So makes himself too common. Or, he's too friendly, or he's too cold, or he mixes too much with the people, or he's never seen outside the rectory."

He talks too much about money. (Poor man! His revenue, on earth, is a good deal about money to him, too; and he has many a bad hour wondering who among his critics is going to help him pay the coal bill.) Or, "Why doesn't he buy new pews and put a little paint on the walls like they're doing in the parish beyond the tracks?"

While it ill becomes us to make remarks as to what we see in church, still one who has his eyesight cannot fail to notice and wonder at the careless manner in which many make the sign of the cross. We were taught from our earliest years that to properly make the sign of the cross one must reverently touch the forehead, then the breast, then the left shoulder, and then the right, saying: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

DO YOU MAKE SIGN OF THE CROSS

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that we must suffer loving souls to mourn over the loss of their dear ones and not debate them from the relief of tears; yet these tears should be dried and their grief soothed by the belief that the just when their debt of nature is paid will enter a better life and are separated from us only for a little while.

A mourner should hope, not fear for the friends whom he has lost. St. Francis de Sales found the thought of Purgatory consoling rather than alarming and regretted that people thought so much of the pains and so little of the joys of Purgatory "for the souls enjoy there an interior peace with which no earthly happiness is comparable."

Dante apostrophizes the souls in Purgatory thus: "O happy souls, secure, when'er it come, of state of peaceful rest." Languishing for love, awaiting the hour of deliverance, secure of eternal happiness these holy souls look to us for assistance. By our prayers we can help them. By our prayers we can give glory to God by filling Heaven with saints, by our prayers we can help ourselves, by assuaging our grief, by paying the debt of true remembrance, and by providing ourselves with powerful intercessors who will plead for us before the Throne of God, when we in our turn shall be numbered among the souls in Purgatory.

A pious custom now more honored in the breach than in the observance decreed that on hearing the news of a death, or in mentioning one who had passed away, the speaker would add "God have mercy on his soul." We cannot afford to allow any such pious legacies from Catholic times to become obsolete.—The Pilot.

CURE FOR DIVORCE EVIL

Justice Russell Benedict of the New York Supreme Court enjoys the honor and distinction of many years' service on the bench. Because of the fact, therefore, it will scarcely be contested that his experiences have been varied, his knowledge extended, and his conclusions ripened to a degree of acceptability.

Such being the case, a large proportion of the American people ought to be interested in a decision he handed down a few days ago, expressing as he does therein his views on one of America's great evils, and suggesting in positive terms his cure for the same. Criticizing the New York Legislature of last year for shortening from five to three years the period after which an application for permission to remarry might be made, Justice Benedict declared that the "only effective way to cure the divorce evil" was to prohibit the remarriage of divorcees during the life of either party.

In support of his contention—based, no doubt, on his judicial experience, and sustained by an intimate personal knowledge of fact—he extends the assurance that a large proportion of divorce actions would never have been brought if the plaintiff were prohibited from contracting a new alliance, arrangements for which are not infrequently made before the suit is begun.

We have herein stated an undeniable fact—now an altogether too common condition—a fact proved by press reports and public records, and by the professional experience of all lawyers, no matter what their practice. And yet Justice Benedict presents it by no means in its most startling or most vicious phase. No choice of words would permit him. So degraded are some of its adherents that any presentation would involve the use of language gravely offensive.

But aside from the experience and knowledge acquired by his long

services on the bench, are there not other confirmatory and convincing reasons that Justice Benedict's cure for the divorce evil is an effective remedy?

To prohibit the remarriage of divorcees would unquestionably end the now very common custom and the compounding of sin and crime involved in divorce suits. The private and primary purpose today in the majority of divorce cases—remarriage, or more properly, legalized concubinage—would be destroyed. To those who regard it as merely a civil contract marriage would be made a more serious matter. Consideration would retard haste, and haste made thoughtless through the remarriage prohibition would certainly reduce to a minimum at least that present prolific source of divorce, "juvenile runaways."

Other sound and acceptable reasons might be advanced. Enough, however, is here for substantiation of Judge Benedict's suggestion, which even if it failed to produce all that it promises in his assurance, has yet to its credit and commending its support the greater and savorier sanction of the law which says: What God hath joined together let no man put asunder.—Church Progress.

VICE MADE PUBLIC

Crime is not more rampant today than it has been in preceding generations. The cry of the public for sensational and scandalous news has led to the publication of the vices of the day, leaving unscrupulous the victims that unobtrusively continue as they have in the past.—Cardinal Gibbons.

SOUND INTELLECT

"If the intellect is sound and firmly based on solid and true principles, its light will become the source of marvellous benefits both to the individual and to the community."—Leo XIII.

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