

Public Spirit of The Catholic Laity.

Address Delivered by the Right Rev. Bishop Hedley, O.S.B., at Birmingham, on January 17.

FIRST PART—FROM LIVERPOOL CATHOLIC TIMES.

There can be no doubt that among those influences which gave strength and stability to the Kingdom of God upon earth, one of the most essential is the active faith of the laity. It is all very well that the laity should be obedient and submissive; but there are two kinds of obedience and two kinds of submission. There is the obedience which acquiesces and sits still; and there is the obedience that is loyally solicitous to do something. There is a type of submission that is timid, quiescent, or even sulky; and another type, a very different one, which frankly looks for opportunities to do whatever is to be done to further the good cause. The Church, by her pastors, has before all things to preserve the purity of faith. Without the faith and without the Catholic instinct which faith creates, all the moral, social, political and individual problems of a generation get wrongly focussed inadequately apprehended, and rashly solved. It is much better to leave secular matters, and even ecclesiastical matters, for a time in abeyance, in apparent neglect than to give in, to make compromises, to fail to bear clear witness, in those guiding and ruling truths of reason and revelation with which it is the glory of the Christian dispensation to have enriched the world. No man can get on with a journey if he consents to have his road broken up. No wise and philosophic intelligence will ever quarrel with the pastors of the Church merely because they seem to be standing still—because they seem to undervalue what some men are straining after—because they do not throw themselves into social, economic, or political contests—or even when they put the drag on movements which well-meaning men are proclaiming to be the remedy for all the world's ills and troubles.

But when all this has been stated and agreed to it has to be admitted, that all the indefinitions of all councils, and all the pastorates of all the hierarchies, will not, of themselves, secure the spread of the Kingdom of God. Putting the clergy on one side, for it is not my part to speak to them to-night, I say that the laity must be alive, must move, must sacrifice themselves, if any strong or lasting effect is to be produced.

A Christian man has two aspects: in the building up of the kingdom, he is at once the material and the workman; it is he who is built into the fabric, and it is he who puts it together. No man has any right to be merely passive. There is an attitude of mind, not so very uncommon, which consists in leaving God's interests to the priests, and setting oneself steadily to the concerns of the world. Such a one will say, "I do not understand religious politics; I do not meddle with them; I am a Catholic and live in my religion and bring up my family to it. But I must confess I do not care for the leading articles of the Catholic newspapers—for the people who get up associations, works, and movements; for foreign Catholics; or if I must confess it, for the pathetic language of my Bishop's pastorals—or even for the regularly recurring lamentations and denunciations of our Holy Father the Pope." This is the mind of a Catholic who is what I call passive. He may say his prayers—though even these will not be as full or as hearty as they might be. For example, how can he say, "Thy kingdom come"; say it, and mean it? But even if he says his prayers, it is quite plain that he is very deficient, very mistaken, and very mean spirited, and the great Head of the Church, Christ, the founder of the divine kingdom on earth, requires more of a man than this. He cannot say, I leave these things to the priests. The priests have a department which belongs to them. The sanctuary is the sanctuary; the pulpit is the pulpit. But there are wide provinces of work in which priest and layman can and should work side by side—and also provinces where the layman must work by himself. Work of this kind may be as truly and really work for the kingdom of God as the work of the pastorate. True, it does not touch spiritual things so closely or so directly. But the dispensation of Christ—the inheritance of the Christians—is not confined to the spiritual—the invisible. The spiritual grace has a physical embodiment. The invisible power of God moves a multitude of corporeal springs. The hidden kingdom can be made or marred by the words, the deeds, the institutions, the laws, and the manners

which make up the perpetual activity of a world of visible humanity. It is one of the great heresies of the modern world to deny the visibility of the Kingdom of Christ. We, on the contrary, hold most clearly and firmly that, although it is not of this world, it is most unmistakably in this world; it shoulders its way in wherever the world is gathered; it is not desirous to keep low or to have its breath; it is not very anxious for peace, because the very noise of battle draws men's eyes towards it and resistance enhances life and vigor; it sometimes divides families and breaks up communities; and it takes a path of its own right across those laborious combinations which men call political parties. Hence it is that no man can escape one of two alternatives, he must either fight for, or fight against it. He that gathereth not— he cannot keep his hands in his pocket—he scattereth. All this is elementary to a Catholic: But there are some consequences of a view of this kind which are by no means readily seen or admitted. The truth is that most of the evil that has fallen upon the Church during the course of her earthly pilgrimage lies at the door of a base and selfish laity. Yes, you may blame the clergy; you may point at worldly Bishops; you may even make out bad Popes; but the clergy in every century all the world over have sprung from the laity; they have been the sons and brothers of the generation in which they lived; their special training ought no doubt to have done something for them, and indeed it often did a very great deal with uncommonly poor materials; but you cannot easily make oak furniture out of common fir, or china plates out of the clay of the brickfield; the clergy of every age have something in them which is the ground and foundation of character and temper and it is the same ground and foundation as you find in the families from which they spring.

Now it seems to me there is one special temperament which the clergy acquire with peculiar facility from their origin and their lay surroundings—I mean worldliness. This was what I referred to just now when I spoke of the base and selfish laity. For worldliness means the badly controlled impulse to make one's self at home in this world; the absence of desire for the spiritual or the eternal; ambition, greed, enjoyment, and kindred vices. Do not be afraid, I am not going to glide into a sermon. I am not going to give a catalogue of those sinful failings to which mortal flesh is liable. I am confining myself to a single line of evil—to a marked and distinct temper of shortcoming. It is a curious thing that worldliness by no means implies a long or black list of evil qualities. It has a peculiar facility for going hand in hand with virtue. You see worldliness that is humble—that yields, that takes a lower place, that sincerely thinks itself feeble and second rate. There is, again, a subtle but common-sense worldliness which is really detached from the common aspirations of the worldling; which is high-minded, unambitious, and contented. There is a worldliness that is generous to the poor. There is worldliness that is so extremely respectable that no breath of scandal ever ruffles the tranquil tenor of its way. There is a church-going worldliness; there is a worldliness which is absolutely pious, nay, even nervously anxious about the saving of its soul, and its prospective lot in the world to come. But there is one note that distinguishes it beyond the possibility of mistake. It is always more or less indifferent to the well-being of the Kingdom of God on earth. That Kingdom—with its head, the Sovereign Pontiff, its hierarchy, its institutions, its rights, its struggles, its successes, its misfortunes—is to the temper of the mind like a foreign land. It is a kingdom that you need not trouble your head about—just like the Continental nations are to the traditional John Bull, who sits complacently at home, surrounded by the rampart of his seas, and largely reads in his newspapers of the troubles, the alterations, and the revolutions of Europe—full of the gratifying feeling that they cannot to any great extent affect him. The worldly man cannot help reading or hearing about his Church—although it is a never-failing source of amazement that so many of our people, who are fairly informed of the world's vicissitudes, show themselves, every now and

then, so utterly unacquainted with the facts, the laws, and the spirit of their own Catholicism. But they read with little concern, like people read of an earthquake in Central America. A slight emotion of wonder, a languid curiosity, cold criticism, and general vagueness—it is thus that the worldly Catholic treats the most vital of all his interests.

And this is worldliness from its most favorable side, for unfortunately it cannot be denied that it often actively allies itself with the enemy, and for selfish motives absolutely promotes or permits the powers of the world to oppress the Church and harass the Kingdom of Christ. I believe that we can trace this base and cowardly spirit of the Catholic laity in every great disaster that has fallen upon the Church of God in the course of history. Other causes must not be ignored. But this one has in almost every case been conspicuously present. For example I suppose the Tudor despotism was made possible and fostered by the subservience of the laity. The Act of Parliament passed in 1539, enacting under pain of fine and imprisonment at the King's pleasure, that the royal proclamations should have the force of law, delivered the Church into the hand of the spoiler. The quiescence of the laity of the south of England made the Elizabethan policy successful. During all that time the laity had no real animus against the Church, but they preferred a quiet life and heads firmly fixed on their shoulders, to lawful opposition. The French revolution was possible through a rotten and degraded laity. The laity became possessed of the property of the Church by the institution of commendam, they filled the bishoprics with men who in many instances were only tonsured laymen, untrained and unsanctified, they adopted the sneer of Voltaire and the pagan philosopher Rousseau; they uttered no protest against the despotism and corruption of their kings or the oppression of their poor; and the great revolution came. There are other instances of a similar kind; but these will serve to illustrate what I mean viz., that it is not so much the weakness of the clergy, or mere sin, or war, or plague that has often brought stupendous evil on the Kingdom of God, but the supineness, the cowardice, the indifference of a laity who, had they taken counsel and stood firm and showed their teeth, might, over and over again, have stopped the beginnings of troubles which afterwards grew to such tremendous proportions. And what has been said of the cause and origin of absolutism, as under the Tudors and the Bourbons, may with equal truth be said of the sources of that militant anti-Catholic movement from which we have to suffer in our day. It is because the laity of France, Spain, Italy—the professional classes, the merchants, the traders, the bankers, the artisans and the laborers—were bent on making money, and refused to concern themselves with any issues outside their own estate, their own menage, their own shop, their own cash-books, their own recreations, their own narrow round of social life, that they let the wild poets, the needy politicians, the noisy patriots, the astute lawyers of their respective countries get the reins, and the keys, and the strong machinery of the modern state into their hands.

I do not believe that the vast majority have had any active hostility to the Church. It may have been otherwise here or there, for various reasons; but in the Latin races the bulk of the people have, as a rule, acquiesced in the Church; the misfortune is that they have also acquiesced in its ill-treatment. The present Pontiff, in his well-known Encyclical "Sapientiae Christianae" of January 10, 1890, on the "Duties of Christian Citizenship," says in one passage that he will not stop to inquire how far the present state of Europe is owing to what he calls the "supineness and dissensions of Catholics," but, he says, it is quite certain that the prevailing scoundrelism would have succeeded worse and destroyed far less had the faith of the majority been of a more robust description. But the past, although it has lessons which we cannot afford to overlook or forget, is less interesting to us than the present. What is to be said about the laity—of our own epoch of this country in which we live? Certainly, as far as I am concerned, all that is good, all that is honorable, I believe that the Catholic laity of our diocese has so far learnt its duty that it is at least agreed on principles. If you follow with attention the public utterances of the present Pope to foreign Catholics you will see that he is perpetually insisting on two things—I mean as regards public duties—first, that the laity, like all Catholics, should recognize that the Church stands on the same footing—as a man's own country or native land. It is an obligation on us, he says, to treat the Church as a Mother, to serve her as we would serve the country we

belong to. Both the one and the other he calls "patria"—"ambas patrias." They are both the native land, the fatherland, of the Christian, Englishman, Irishman, Scotchman, Frenchman, German, or Italian. You may be proud of your country, you may love her, you may be glad to do her service, but you must also be proud of your Church and your religion, you must be as glad to do your religion all the service in your power; nay, if there is a conflict or an incompatibility the kingdom of Christ takes precedence of even that earthly state which is also of Divine institution. This principle we understand it was this principle upon which our fathers acted, and that for which so many of them died. The other principle as laid down by our Holy Father is that thalaity, in their exertions on behalf of the Church, should take their direction from the pastorate of the Church. The frequency with which Leo XIII. insists on this points to a state of things which is only slightly known here—to political bargains, dynastic divisions, socialistic theories, and theological liberalism. For our own part, I take it that the laity in this country both accurately comprehend and willingly follow such a rule as this. It is a rule, however, that can never at any time or place be entirely obsolete.

If we take the four great objects on which, in this country, the laity are called upon to work for the Kingdom of God—education, the Poor-law, rescue, and the prevention of loss of Faith—it is evident that there enters into the practical treatment of each of them theological questions which, naturally, no layman can undertake to solve. What can we expect, for example, in the shape of a compromise from the Government, the Guardians, the School Board? What is essential, and what is a matter for arrangement? How far is it compatible with keeping the Faith pure to join hands with non-Catholic societies? Such questions have to be answered by the Church's pastors. And this is well understood by the laity of this country. These axioms, or maxims, being pre-supposed, I may say that there are five departments or provinces in which a layman may be called upon to help in the good cause of religion. The first I call the priest; the second, the board; the third, the club; the fourth, the Press; the fifth, the purse. First, the priest. We must remember that in this country the priest, in most missions, is obliged to be not only priest, but the organizer of everything. He has not only to perform the sacred offices of the Holy Liturgy to instruct, and to hear confessions, but to beg his own bread, to keep a roof on his Church, to provide for the decorum of God's house, to visit and relieve his poor, to seek out the children, to find means for his schools to conciliate or to fight the public bodies and the non-Catholic world in general to keep hold of the young people of both sexes by clubs and guilds, and to visit and watch half a dozen public institutions. Such are our clergy in this country. Human nature is human nature, and there are few priests amongst us all who have no defects which it does not require any strong magnifying power to discover. But it is confessed by all that, as a body, they have these things to do, and they fairly do them. As that is so, is there any layman, worthy of the name of Catholic, who will refuse to give his priest his sympathy?

Sympathy is no slight thing. Laymen should force themselves to see how good work is being done. They should put themselves into the priest's position, and try to see things as they are. They should oblige themselves to take a view which is adequate, comprehensive, just to the priest. They should at least generously recognize his burdens and his labors. Then they should be considerate. A priest is neither an angel nor is he Solomon and St. Vincent de Paul combined. If some things do not get done, if there are shortcomings, if there is temper before the layman grows, or criticisms, or condemnations, or dilates, let him be considerate. Further, let the layman be loyal and ready. Let him be prepared to take trouble, to put his own feelings on one side, and to place himself at the priest's service. And let him not spoil his loyalty by the spirit of dictation and business. All priests want lay help. But some laymen are mere grumblers, others are too selfish, others are what is called impossible. There is no exercise of brotherly love so meritorious as genuine love of one's pastor; no work of self-denial so needful as the drill and self-control which enables a man to work with his priest; and no wisdom or philosophy so noble and high-minded as that lofty view by which a gentleman overlooks small drawbacks in order to be of some use in promoting the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

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OUR OBSERVER In Musical Circles.

Of all the external auxiliaries in Catholic worship, perhaps the sacred music of the Church is at once the most sublime and solemn. In its very simplicity does it breathe devotion, and in its loftier strains it serves as an inspiration to elevate man to God, to raise our frail nature above the perishable things of earth and cause the soul to commingle with angelic beings in the rapture of pure adoration. Of late years a tendency has sprung up to secularize the music of the Church, and the Holy Father, himself, was the first to indicate the danger that menaces from that source. Since attention has been drawn to the subject, by such high authority, it has become one of wide interest, especially on this continent. Recently, Archbishop Elder of Cincinnati, caused a diocesan commission to be appointed to examine reports on the desirability or otherwise of certain music in general use. The Milwaukee Catholic Citizen, states that the work of that commission has been completed, and that the report is now made. In that report is a list of masses approved and another list disapproved. Among the latter are found a number by the masters Haydn, Mozart, Gounod and others. This is the first official attempt in America to bring about a much needed reform.

The objection to those masses—otherwise masterpieces of musical composition—is that their character is not religious, and savors more of the dramatic music of the opera. Should this reformation be practically carried out, it will be of untold service to the Church and to the faithful. There is nothing more beautiful, in our humble opinion, than the grand, solemn swelling of the Gregorian Chant; nothing that has ever been sung by man can surpass its devotion—imparting effects the simple "Preface" of the Mass, or the "Ater Noster"; nothing we know of can stir the heart into communion with heaven, and cast around the hour of prayer a brighter and more soothing glow of fervor, than the swell of a "Te Deum," or the harmony of an old "Tantum Ergo." All variations, all innovations, all artistic and fantastic arrangements can only serve to destroy the melody and efface the sentiment that the original is calculated to awaken. As well drown an old Irish melody in a flood of Italian operatic eccentricities, and then ask the lover of the genuine air to hunt for it in that chaos of sound. In this connection we might observe that in Montreal, the city of Churches, the "Rome of America," our parish choirs are possibly more perfect than elsewhere in Canada, and they can be favorably compared with the best on the Continent. Not only is their rendering of sacred music charming, artistic and often faultless, but our churches are rarely the theatres of operatic masses. Moreover, Montreal can justly boast of its own compositions, and these of a nature calculated to unite all the charms of art with all the requirements of devotion.

Recently, a very important sermon on this subject, was preached in the Toronto Cathedral by the learned and eloquent Dr. Tracy. We would gladly reproduce the whole of that masterly effort; but circumstances oblige us to confine ourselves to some leading points and more important extracts. After an explanatory introduction the reverend preacher lays down as an axiom that, "Religion is the highest expression of man's duty to God," and that she has enlisted in His service all the arts and sciences. As hearing is the most spiritual of the senses, for its influence on the soul is the most direct, so through its medium does the Church seek to incite devotion. After speaking eloquently on the art of producing harmony and melody, after showing that music is the universal language natural to man, and after dwelling on the music that exists in all nature, the preacher spoke thus of it as one of the principal aids to public worship:— "We are told in the Bible that when the Lord had delivered them out of the house of bondage and from the tyranny of Pharaoh, they sang a glorious canticle of praise on the banks of the Red Sea, and accompanied their song with the music of the timbrels. But the day came when the old religion of the Jews had to make way for the newer and higher worship of Christianity.

The new religion, with its grand majestic truths, full of deep and sacred meaning; its tones of reformation and self-sacrifice, its clear insight into the mysteries of the other life, demanded a more solemn worship, a

more gorgeous and impressive ritual, than the old dispensation. It was music in itself. Its advent was ushered in by choirs of heavenly angels, who chanted their canticles of glory to God at the birth of its Divine Founder. Hence it is that from the early beginning the early Christians were accustomed to proclaim their belief in the new faith, their praises of their crucified God, in music and song. Whenever they met together in their humble churches, on the bleak mountain side, or in the subterranean catacombs of Rome, where they hid themselves from Pagan persecution, they raised their voices to their Creator in hymns and songs, until Pagans like Pliny could bring no other accusation against them except that they assembled together before sunrise to sing the praises of their crucified God. Thus from the beginning music accompanied the dolorous but triumphant march of the new faith, and down from the catacombs comes to us the personification of early music in the person of St. Cecilia, who, according to the old legend, played and sang so sweetly that angels came down from heaven to listen to her.

Having told the history of the music in the church from the time of the early Christians down to (590-604) St. Gregory, "the father of plain chant," and having shown how the "Law of Chant should correspond to the Law of Faith," the learned doctor makes use of the following graphic words:— "Born of the Church, and bred by her in the choir schools of the Middle Ages, sacred music is the outcome of the Catholic Faith. It harmonizes with the Gothic cathedrals, with the convent cloisters, with the paintings and sculptures that religion has created. It follows the liturgical offices and feasts of the Church through the ecclesiastical year, now rising in tones of triumph, now falling into soft melodies of mercy and pardon, and again quivering with little thrills of joy, as in the "Adeste Fideles," and "Officium de Filiae," until it becomes a popular song with Catholic children. What more pathetic music than the beautiful chant of the Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet. In listening to his soul-thrilling harmony we almost hear the sobs of grief swelling up from the hearts of the daughters of Zion as they mourn over the ruin of their country. What solemn emotions the "De Profundis" and the "Miserere" arouse in the soul. The music of the Psalms passes to the inmost recesses of the heart, pales the cheek of the listener, and unconsciously forces the tears to the eyes. In hearing those solemn strains of sacred music we go back into imagination to the old church of Milan, and murmur to ourselves the beautiful words of St. Augustine: "Thy hymns and songs, Oh my God, and the sweet chant of Thy Church stirred and penetrated my whole being. The notes streamed into my ears and caused truth to flow into my heart; from whose fount the feelings came swelling up, and I ended at last in a flow of tears. In the month of November when the leaves are falling, and Nature assumes a solemn aspect, the Church offers up her prayers and supplications for the faithful departed in the beautiful Mass of Requiem, which writers tell us was once the funeral chant of the Greeks in the time of Pericles. This music brings us face to face with the tomb and its awful realities, and inspires us with sentiments of sorrow for sin and with confidence in the mercy of God.

And as in the wild music of nature there is always one dominant tone, so also in the Mass for the dead, and especially in the "Dies Irae" that matchless production of the Franciscan monk, Thomas de Celano, although, fear of death, horror and dread of eternal misery, and other sentiments are evoked, yet the church returns after every alternate straggle to the dominant note which is one of supplication for pardon through the merits of Christ. It is this frequent and abrupt recurrence to the master thought that startles and impresses all. The Catholic Church is the mother of sacred music. Gregory, Palestrina, Rossini, Aquinas, Mozart, Gounod, Cherubini, and Handel have produced works of art which are as immortal as the truths they represent. Lately in the person of a young Italian priest, Fr. Perosi, she has combined all that is beautiful and majestic in secular music with her own sweet, solemn tones in the production of classical music of such a high standard that the master minds of Europe know not which to admire more, the genius of the singer, or the beauty of his song. The Catholic Church recognizes that man has not only a head but he has a heart. He is also endowed with reason, but he is also a child of emotion, and therefore she brings the great truths before his mind in painting, in sculpture and in music."

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