

WHAT IS BEATIFICATION.

PRACTICAL MEANING OF THE PROCESS SET FORTH.

A Correction of Erroneous Views—The Action of the Church is Neither Useless Nor Unprofitable to the Modern World.

It is curious to note the concern that Protestant writers show from time to time in matters that are strictly Catholic. And certainly we can have no objection to such attention so long as it is prompted by a desire to know what the Church teaches and leads to a just appreciation of her doctrines. But when our beliefs are presented in such a way as to convey false impressions, we naturally take exception. This we must do especially when the misrepresentation is of the subtler sort. Gross charges of "idolatry," of "ignorance" or of "foreignism" are often so absurd that they refute themselves and simply show the influence of "atavism" in their authors. With the growth and spread of intelligence the necessity of replying to such enormities must diminish and, we may hope, entirely disappear. The more plausible form of accusation is that in which Catholic belief is tolerably outlined, while only the nicer shades are blurred. In this case the amount of fairness and of information which a writer seems to possess helps to strengthen the erroneous inferences of the reader.

The Independent of May 24 contains a sample of this misleading art. "Beatification" is the subject on which the editor expresses his views, with the obvious purpose of bringing the Church to task. The lesson he supposes to be a timely one, because just now the cause of Joan of Arc has been formally introduced and her name will soon appear in the calendar. "This kind of beatification," he tells us, "Protestants do not regard." Very well, then, we would say, for in that case it is equally true that this kind of beatification does not regard Protestants. Why bring up the subject at all? If Catholics, who alone are interested, have to choose between the teaching of the Church in regard to beatification and the opinion of even such a respectable journal as the Independent, it is enough to see what their choice will be. That Protestants should be indifferent to the action of the Church in this matter is no surprise to us. We regret, of course, that this is the case, but we understand their position thoroughly. It is not that they lack sympathy for what is good and pure, but that they do not recognize the authority which issues the decree of beatification. All that we ask in return is a similar understanding of our position.

The Independent says that the Catholic judgment is a "useless, unprofitable and unscriptural process, cumbering an already crowded calendar, leading the thoughtless to a species of idolatry and resulting sometimes in the canonization of people whose saintship is more traditional than real." What particular evil there can be in "cumbering the calendar" we fail to see, as we are not aware that the calendar is limited in size. As to the danger of idolatry or of canonizing the wrong people, we have no fear whatever; the Church is far more vigilant and exacting on these points than any editor could possibly be. But, we are told, the process is useless. Why? Because the Maid of Orleans will not be any more "sacred to the world" or helpful to those who invoke her "than she has been in the centuries past." No one claims that she will. Beatification is not the giving of a diploma by which the recipient profits. It does not pretend to raise the beatified person a step higher in heaven or to give him additional power. Its utility consists in extending and intensifying the devotion of the faithful. Where such devotion already exists, it is strengthened by the formal sanction of the Church, and where it has not hitherto existed, beatification proposes to men a new model and patron.

The Independent, however, "believes in saints and in beatification," and having made this profession of faith, proceeds to specify. "God has not called here and there a man and a woman, among all the nations and in all the centuries, to be saints; but He has offered the honor and the privilege and the duty to all who believe on Him." Assuredly He has. This is a genuine Catholic doctrine. The trouble is that not all accept the offer. Beatification does not im-

ply that only the beatified are called of God. It does not even mean that only those whom the Church so honors are saints; it is not an exclusive process. It does mean that among those who have led holy lives such a one has been conspicuous and has received special marks of the Divine favor. "Be ye holy, even as I am holy," was not addressed, we are informed, "to monks and nuns wearing out their lives by vigils, fastings, penances, prayers in caves and cloisters, but to men and women who live in the world and take up the full round of duties as parents and citizens and social beings." Were this sentence to be taken as it stands, it would mean that people in the world and not those who enter the religious life are called to sanctity. But as such a construction would ill accord with the statement that "all who believe on Him" are offered the privilege, we prefer to take the more rational meaning, viz., that in the world as well as in the cloister holiness is a duty.

Did the Catholic Church ever teach anything else? In the "crowded calendar" there are men and women from every honest walk of life. These the Church holds up for our imitation in order that no one may allege his or her position in the world as an excuse for not being holy, but that all may sanctify themselves in properly discharging their "full round of duty." The Independent is right when it says: "There is a great need of saints in the Church and in the world." But should this need hinder the Church from beatifying such saints as she actually finds? Her chief reason for honoring them is to urge others along the same path and so to supply the need. Her constant endeavor is to have people "live pure, unselfish, humble lives where God has placed them. This is the ideal sainthood." True again; but how can men be brought more effectually to this than by having others set before them in whom the "ideal" has been realized? It is hardly consistent to quarrel with the Church for saying, "This man was a saint," and in the same paragraph to complain that "we want saints."

"Let us go to the Beatitudes and learn from them the true process of beatification; and when we have learned it, we shall not care to have a body of grave cardinals sit in judgment upon it and an 'infallible' Pope proclaim it under his official seal." The passage is either a flat sophism or a play upon words that does not besit a serious subject. As though the Church identified the process by which one becomes a saint and the process by which he is proclaimed a saint! When did the cardinals pass judgment upon the Beatitudes or the Pope proclaim them under his official seal? What the Church judges is whether this or that individual has lived up to the Beatitudes or not; whether those who have "learned the true process" have taken care to put it in practice; whether having studied the ideal, they have attained to real sainthood. And since we are referred to the Sermon on the Mount, it may not be amiss to note that it contains certain directions in regard to prayer and fasting—practices which the Independent does not seem to include in its notion of holiness.

Perhaps, after all, we have been arguing on a false supposition. Considering the difficulties which, especially in the world, attend the work of our sanctification, we Catholics are rather glad of even the smallest help. If the prayer of a person better than ourselves can profit us while that person is still on earth, we see no reason why his influence should not be as great when he reaches heaven. If St. Paul could beseech his brethren to help him in their prayers for him to God, why may we not ask St. Paul to help us, his brethren? But then the apostle of the Gentiles knew nothing of the modern idea. Says the Independent: "The saints who have died in the Lord have left us precious memories and examples, * * * but we do not need them as intercessors in heaven." Well, that changes the matter. Catholics are not so sure that "God canonizes before death" as to feel that they need no help from the saints. But supposing that their confidence should ever grow so strong, beatification will always serve a purpose. It will remind men, at least, that others with the same passions and the same weaknesses have followed in the footsteps of the Master.—VERITAS, in Philadelphia Catholic Times.

New churches built in America last year numbered nearly 10,000.

MARRIAGES AMONG CATHOLICS.

Nobody has occasion for getting excited over the question raised in some quarters, "why Catholic young men and women find it impossible to get themselves properly mated," for there is nothing in the facts to justify any such discussion. There is no such impossibility.

It is probable that in this country at the present time the marriage rate is higher among Catholics than among Protestants. In New England, for instance, the decrease in the number of marriages proportionately to the population, which attracted so much attention in former years, has since been arrested by the incoming of great multitudes of people not of the old Puritan stock, and generally of the Roman Catholic faith. Here in New York, the majority of the population having any religious belief at all being Roman Catholics, it is natural that the majority of marriages receiving religious sanction should get it from priests of the Church of Rome; but the number, it may be assumed, is larger proportionately than the Catholic population.

The decline in the marriage rate, which has been observable of late in most highly civilized countries, has not occurred among the devout religious believers of either the Protestant or the Catholic faith. It has been due rather to the indisposition to marriage because of prudential reasons among critical people who have put themselves outside of the authority of any Church, or are only nominally Catholics or Protestants. The supersensitiveness which is a consequence of refinement carried to the extreme of degeneration, is also having some effect to lessen marriages in the circle of society to which such deterioration is confined. But generally, among the people who give heed to the admonition of the Church, the young men and maidens are marrying at as great a rate as ever. A period of adversity, such as that through which we have been passing, may restrain them from matrimony for the time being, but it only delays the inevitable mating. They are not kept from marriage either by indisposition to it or to the impossibility of getting mates.

It may be that in some parts of this country, where the Roman Catholics are few proportionately, cultivated girls of that faith may complain of lack of desirable Catholic swains, but at the present time such places are rare. It may be that individual Catholic girls will prefer Protestant to Catholic lovers even where the supply of young men of their own faith is abundant; and it may be just the other way with some Protestant girls; but in neither case does the preference necessarily imply inferiority in the young men of either faith. Marriages between Catholics and Protestants are many actually, though proportionately to the number where both husband and wife are of one faith, they are not frequent; but they do not occur because in one or the other faith there is any deficiency of eligible mates.

Undoubtedly it was once true that it was next to impossible for a Roman Catholic girl to find a husband of her faith in the New York circle of fashion, for it was made up almost wholly of Protestant families; but of recent years there has been a great change in its composition, so far as religion goes. The majority may still be Protestant, but there is a strong and conspicuous Catholic minority, which is steadily increasing. It is also true that the great mass of the Catholics of this country are poor immigrants, or the descendants of poor immigrants, but among these there

has been a rapid advance in education and social refinement, which has tended to obliterate any distinction that once may have existed between them and their Protestant neighbors.—N. Y. Sun.

Irish News Items.

A number of cases of small-pox have been discovered in Dublin.

At the August meeting of the Belturbet Town Commissioners, Mr. Timothy Boland, Nationalist, was elected chairman in the room of Dr. P. Soraghan, Unionist. Great satisfaction is felt by the people of the town over the event.

The National Trustees acknowledge Aug. 10, the receipt of £476 for the Parliamentary Fund. £425 of the amount comes through Mr. Sexton from the city of Belfast as the first instalment of the contributions of the Nationalists of the city to the fund.

The pupils of the Ursuline Nuns, at Thurles have carried off six certificates of distinction, and fifteen pass certificates at the recent examinations held by the Examiner of the Associated Board of the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music, London.

Several influential Unionists of South Tyrone have requested Dr. E. C. Thompson, of Omagh, to become a candidate for the representation of that division at the next election. Dr. Thompson unsuccessfully contested Mid-Tyrone at the last election against Mr. Kenny.

A record was established at the all-round championships sports at Ballebridge on August 6, when Kiely, of Carrick-on-Suir, beat the world's record in throwing the hammer. He threw the hammer a distance of 131 ft. 7 in., which is an inch better than his own throw at Kilkenny last year.

An inquest was held August 9, at Raphoe, Co. Donegal, touching the death of a young man named Samuel Wilson, aged twenty, a native of Castlederg, who was killed by a fall from his bicycle. The deceased tumbled in trying to remount his machine and fell, dislocating his neck. He died in a few minutes. A verdict of accidental death was returned.

It is stated that, besides Mr. Colliery, M.P., whose resignation has for some time been in the hands of Mr. McCarthy to vacate his seat when convenient, three other members of the Irish Whig Parliamentary Party will retire at the close of the present session, on the ground of ill-health, and for other special reasons, not on account of any difference with their colleagues.

It is stated that Lord Justice Barry, one of the Lords of appeal in Ireland, will shortly retire on pension on account of ill health. He will, it is understood, be succeeded by The M'Dermott, at present Attorney-General for Ireland. In that case Sergeant Hemphill, now Solicitor-General for Ireland, would become the Irish Attorney-General. It is now stated that there is no foundation for the report.

At a meeting of Fermoy Town Commissioners, on Aug 9, Mr. Thomas Maguire in the chair, the following resolution was proposed, and passed unanimously: That an address be presented to the Right Rev. Dr. Browne on the occasion of his consecration as Bishop of Cloyne, from the Town Commissioners and people of Fermoy, of which his lordship is parish priest, and that a committee be appointed to draw up and present it to his lordship at Queenstown on the 19th instant.

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