

THE BLESSING OF THE NEW BANNER.

Sunday, May 14th, the Franciscan Church, Dorchester street, was the scene of four imposing ceremonies.

The first was the blessing of the new banner of the Immaculate Conception. The second was the investing of twenty members with the cord and scapular.

The third consisted of the solemn profession of five members, and the fourth a procession around the church.

Rev. Father Christopher, O.F.M., director of the English-speaking tertiaris, preached the following sermon:

Prepare the way, and lift up the standard to the people. (Isa. 62-10.)

It is with great pleasure I see you here assembled, to witness the solemn blessing of the religious standard destined to waive above the heads of the English-speaking members of the Third Order of St. Francis.

To understand the reason why the Church blesses certain objects, you have but to recall to mind the evil results of original sin, and that Christ came to repair the evil consequences of the first Adam's sin.

From Christ therefore comes every special blessing we receive. When the world was first created by God it glorified Him—as it is written, "God saw all things that He had made and they were very good."

They answered the two-fold purpose of their existence, viz.: the glory of God, and the physical and moral wellbeing of man; but when the responsible head of the human race transgressed the law of his Creator, the consequences of his act were extended to creatures which before had been subject to him.

In one part of Holy Writ we are told that beasts and birds went before Adam, and he gave them their names; but this harmony was interrupted, for sin drew down the curse of God upon earth, and man was compelled to gain his bread by his own toil.

Sin vitiated man and what depended on him, and subjected them to the power of Satan. It was to destroy this power of the evil one that Christ came.

"Now shall the prince of this world be cast out, and I, if be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself." Through the merits of Christ we are disengaged from the slavery of Satan, freed from civil, and dedicated to God; we are called to holiness of life, and from the mind, heart and imagination of man should proceed nothing deserving of Divine disapprobation.

"Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." By the blessing which the Church imparts to the things you use she sets them apart for Divine service, or by her prayers brings down the blessing of God upon them; such blessings should remind you of your own calling to holiness of life, for they are blessed for your sake; thus, she blesses your houses and your food, your domestic animals and your cattle, she blesses your meadows and fields, and your vines and crops; she blesses your ships, and the flags destined to excite the courage of your soldiers, and unite them; she blesses the earth destined to hide your mortal remains till Christ comes again to judge the living and the dead.

In the language of the Church, to bless something means to free it from the baneful influence of evil spirits, to sanctify it, to give it a virtue of its own, to set it apart for religious ceremonies only. In a blessing, then, the Church sums up the history of man's fall and of his redemption; of Calvary and the paradise there brought for us; and we are reminded, too, that time is but the prelude to eternity. A solemn blessing is about to be imparted to this beautiful banner that we are united in offering to the Mother of God as a token of our love and veneration for her; ranked among sacred objects through that blessing I am confident it will exert a sweet influence over your minds and hearts.

A religious banner is a cross from which hangs the representation of a saint, or motto, painted on silk or linen. Banners are carried along in processions or hung around the altar, their chief end being to show forth the victory of Christ, and they are the signs by which parishes and confraternities are distinguished from one another. Soldiers in battle look to the colors of their regiment and are encouraged to fight bravely as long as it waves over their comrades, and when the battle is won, they rally round it, and rejoice at having successfully defended it. Thus, too, Christians are taught by the ecclesiastical sanction given to banners to look up to the cross of Christ, and to derive courage from the thought of Christ's example.

"Who endured the cross, despising the shame," and suffered in the flesh, leaving you an example that

you should follow His steps." It is a profitable thing for the members of a society or confraternity to group around a symbol, especially when that symbol strikingly reminds them of the virtues peculiar to Christianity; and after Christ I can surely hold out for your consideration no better model of virtue than Christ's own Blessed Mother. The picture of Mary Immaculate will speak to your hearts; for by the consideration of what we see we are led on to the thought and love of Christ's mother, whom we see not.

This representation of your heavenly Patroness must not be for you a mere picture, a dead letter; it should speak to your hearts, excite your faith and confidence, and encourage you to persevering faithfulness in the service of God. It should remind you of her great intercessory power, a natural consequence of her intimate relationship to the Man God from Whom all spiritual blessings flow even when He bestows them on us in answer to the prayers of His saints or of His Blessed Mother.

She is represented with the moon under her feet, and twelve stars above her head. The moon represents the Catholic Church, and the twelve stars the twelve Apostles who had been commissioned by Christ to found His Church. We must not be satisfied with admiring her grandeur, we must learn from her how to serve God in joy and sorrow, in adversity and prosperity.

You also are soldiers of Christ, engaged in spiritual combat. It is your business not only to avoid being carried away by the current of religious indifference and human respect, but also to oppose it by good example; it is your business to struggle against the perverse inclinations of corrupt nature; to avoid the snares and frustrate the evil designs of these evil spirits that are leagued together, and roam among the children of men for no other purpose than that of bringing about their spiritual downfall in time, and leading them to eternal ruin. In this warfare with the enemies of your soul, look up sometimes at your banner, and invoke Mary, remembering that you have in her a powerful protectress. You are strangers and pilgrims on earth, journeying along a road bordered with precipices and strewn with dangers. When, then, you experience that the life of man on earth is filled with many miseries, and the road to heaven a straight and narrow one, think of Mary, and learn from her that the only life worthy of the disciples of her crucified son is a life of virtue, of sacrifice, and of patient endurance, and that the sorrows of life are light and dwindle into insignificance when compared with the joys by which they are followed. May she inflame your hearts with zeal for the honor of your Heavenly Father, and your own eternal welfare. May she banish from your midst all discord, and unite you in charity, which is the bond of perfection. May she direct your steps in the path of holiness, truth and peace. May she obtain for us all the grace to seek and tend unceasingly towards God by the accomplishment of every duty, and the practice of every Christian virtue.

After the sermon, the banner was blessed by Father Christopher. Then followed the reception of twenty members who were invested with the cord and scapular. After that came the solemn profession of five members. Then the procession around the church took place. Thirty little girls dressed in white, four carrying baskets of flowers walked at the head. The banner was carried by two professed lady members of the Order, the blue streamers being held by four little tots. The procession was a long one, nearly four hundred being in line. The ceremony was most impressive, and one could not witness such a sight without being deeply touched.

Envy is a most fatal evil; when it reigns in a soul, it troubles, blinds and excites it to every excess. It is from self love that envy springs, and it is the love of the common welfare that combats and destroys it.—St. Anthony of Padua.

There is a working class—strong and happy—among both rich and poor; there is an idle class—weak, wicked and miserable—among both rich and poor. And the worst of the misunderstandings arising between the two orders come of the unlucky fact that the wise of one class habitually contemplate the foolish of the other. When men are rightfully occupied, their amusement grows out of their work as the color petals out of a fruitful flower. He only is advancing in life whose heart is getting softer, whose blood warmer, whose brain quicker, whose spirit is entering into living peace.—John Ruskin.

MADONNA IN EARLY ITALIAN ART.

Interesting Lecture by a Well-Known Journalist in Rome.

Under the auspices of the Coliège Literary and Debating Society of the Irish College at Rome, a lecture on the "Madonna in Early Italian Art" was delivered by Mr. P. L. Connellan, who is so well known as a regular contributor to the Freeman's Journal, Dublin. The chair was occupied by the Bishop of Philadelphia (Rector of the English College), and there were present the students of the English, Scotch, and American Colleges; the members of the Dominican and Franciscan Communities, and several other English-speaking ecclesiastics. The lecturer, in tracing the course of Christian art from its earliest appearance to its highest development in the golden age of the Italian Renaissance, showed how it began in the Catacombs, how at first it differed but little from contemporary Pagan art, how a change was gradually brought about, how the Saviour of the World was at all times a prominent theme, how, next to this theme and closely connected with it, came that of the Virgin Mother of God. This was especially so in Italy—the Blessed Virgin's land—where now, after the lapse of so many centuries, the weariness of the roadside is chased away by the shrine of the Madonna; the village streets are made picturesque by the image that relieves their squalor, and where the palaces of the great cities treasure the masterpieces that show forth the gentle face of Mary.

The earliest known painting of the Madonna is ascribed by the highest authority as anterior to the year 150, and is found in the Catacomb of St. Pricilla. The same subject is met with over and over again in the course of the next three centuries, the Adoration of the Magi and the Annunciation being the most common. But when the days of persecution had come to an end the painting of Mary, issuing forth from the subterranean silence of the Catacombs into the full light of day, followed the triumphant course of Christianity; churches sprang into being; wealth was lavished on their decoration. A new style of art, now known as the Byzantine, appeared and took possession of all lands. Its first witness is Ravenna, where the great 6th century mosaic of the Madonna, serene, majestic, statly, spiritual, that fixed the type art was to know for centuries, looks down from the apex of the Church of St. Apollinare. The same type may be seen in the beautiful frescoes in the Catacombs of Commodilla, brought to light a few months ago, and in the recently discovered Church of St. Maria Antiqua at the Forum. But all this time, and for centuries later, art languished, and it was only in the 13th century that new forces began to work. Then "the Madonna was seen to smile for the first time with a smile which enamored all Italy." It was the dawn of the golden age of art—that age when art was, in truth, a prayer, an act of faith, and the fulfilment of a vow. Cimabue, born in 1240, led the way, and it was a glorious day when his picture, now in Florence, was admired by King Charles the Elder, was carried in triumphant procession by the people and gave to the quarter in which it had been painted the name of the Borgo Allegro or Gladstone Place. Sienna followed closely on Florence, creating a new school of art, and a new type of Madonna, remarkable for distinction and beauty, and a strange haunting charm. But so far, pictures lacked life and soul. These were first imparted by Giotto, the all-round man—painter, sculptor, and architect—the great leader of art, who so lovingly and so faithfully depicted almost every phase of the life of Mary. A whole host of painters followed on his lines and made a new epoch of religious art in which, above all else, devotion was deep, and artistic expression clear and simple. So long as this continued to all was well—so long as art existed for the sake of religion; but there soon came a day when art was used for art's sake alone, when if religion was taken into account it was as a mere cloak to hide the artists' strivings after mere effect, and when far more attention was paid to the heroes of Greek mythology than to the simple record of the Gospels. A new era dawned, and the old age of simple belief and devotion no longer influenced painting. Mary is no longer the Madonna of old. She becomes a country girl sitting under the shadow of a pine tree; or a Flo-

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refine woman on the banks of a stream. Venice had aberrations of her own which remain aberrations, even though they are recommended to us by the genius of Paul Veronese, Titian and Tintoretto. By a strange fatality it was those great masters whose names are so entwined with the story of Christian art—Raphael and Michael Angelo and Andrea del Sarto—who most contributed to the decline of Christian art, and to the dreary decades of wasted genius that followed so closely on their day. True it is that in everything they painted they were always great masters in the highest qualities of technique, design, color and composition. But their works lack the religious character: their figures are splendid and beautiful specimens of men and women, but sanctity and saintly contemplation are no longer to be found. The paintings are great and glorious, but not the type that one should place above an altar where the "holy people of God would come to pray." But it must not be imagined that there are no redeeming features, from the aspect of Christian art, in these great Masters. Ruskin is not always friendly, but he admits that Raphael was able at times to combine in pictures of the Madonna free and transcendent beauty with an expression of deep foreboding; while most critics allow to this school much pensiveness sweetness and refined sentiment, along with true grace and beauty. At any rate Perugino is a beacon-light that sheds a pure, devotional ray round the type of Madonna that had become enshrined in Italian art; while Sandro Botticelli's "Magnificat" is one of the loveliest and tenderest works that centre round devotion to Mary. Italian art, however, could not be arrested in its downward course, and how it now stands may be best judged from the fact that when Leo XIII. offered a prize of 10,000 francs for the best picture of the Holy Family it was found that of about sixty competitors not one work was judged worthy of the prize.

The lecture, which was illustrated by photographs, was listened to with deep attention, and evoked frequent bursts of well deserved applause. The usual votes of thanks having been passed, the Most Reverend Chairman, replying, said that it was no surprise to anyone who knew Mr. Connellan to learn how deep was his acquaintance with the subject on which he had lectured. Even so, he (the Chairman) was bound to confess that while, thanks to a long residence in Italy, and to a taste for art, it had been his good fortune to read and study the subject closely, yet in Mr. Connellan's lecture he, for the first time, found the religious aspect of art discussed in an orderly and historic manner. As for himself, he (the Chairman) was glad to be able to give expression to his sense of the honor done him by the students in asking him to preside on that occasion. It was only one more instance of the friendly relations that had subsisted for more years than he cared to count between himself and the Irish College.

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Vol. LIV., No.

Author of "The Lives of the Saints"

Dublin, May 18—Penny child going to rest has away the great Irish John Canon O'Hanlon,

of Sandymount, County of Dublin. Thousands of clerics and laymen over the world will lament his personal sorrow

of the gentle and gifted the Star of the Sea. His literary labors for his have compelled the highest eulogies even from the cautious. To others it is counted the saintly life an hard-working Irish priest's cerebral capacity; our duty to outline his literary merit zealous minister of labor in the cure of souls to his charge than that of Canon O'Hanlon, who entered into his reward.

Lying now before us, is the late Freeman's Journal, published by the Rev. Fr. Michael and John O'Hanlon, in the year 1873, wherein the following are announced the publication of the compilation of which ever hand his name down ration to generation, to be with Fitzsimon, White, Lombard, Fleming, Wad and Colgan. For twenty Father O'Hanlon had been the material for his magazine and assured his subscribers he would "faithfully endeavor to fulfill every specified in the prospectus right faithfully and honorably author redeem his Ever since the year 1873 of the Irish Saints' has appearing in parts of 64 and one can only stand the indomitable perseverance single man even after sketchy account of the 3 saints whose lives have been by Canon O'Hanlon with a learning and conscientious that few could equal. Let us state the actual mechanism of this colossal literary work. The first volume contained 100 pages; the second had 736 pages; the third 1036 pages; the fourth 1036 pages; the fifth 1036 pages; the sixth 1036 pages. Succeeding volumes about the same character, number was completed last October. Each volume has been pro-illustrated, and full references given. It is of interest to scholar to learn that the Irish font of type used there had been designed by Dr. J. J. O'Hanlon, the Catholic University. The authors who originally became subscribers in 1872 only two names, Cardinal Moran, of Philadelphia, and Archbishop Ryan, of Philadelphia. The late Brother Grady a list of over 100 subscribers: "You have done your duty—it remains for us to do. Especially pleased was the with the letters and subscriptions from Archbishop MacHale, of Mayo, and Aubrey Denis Florence McCarthy, of Graves, Rev. Dr. Todd, Bishop of Philadelphia, and the late Cardinal Vaughan, and Victor de Buck, S.J., the late.

Born over eighty years ago O'Hanlon was a veritable store of archaeological lore, especially everything pertaining to the history of Queen's County. As he listened with rapture to O'Connell speaking at the Heath, Maryborough, in 1845, he was present at the public given to the Liberator at Strathmore, on the evening of the memorable day. He loved to write the political ballads of 1830 written apropos of Sir Henry Parnell (author of the "History of the Penal Laws"), who was Lord Congleton in 1841; and he spoke of the fast discipline tones sung and played in Queen's County in the present period.