

CONSECRATION OF THE CONVENT OF THE HOLY ROSARY AT OAMARU.

SOME four or five weeks ago, the Dominican nuns arrived in Oamaru for the purpose of opening a convent and school, and the ceremony of blessing the convent was performed last Sunday by his Lordship the Bishop.

The Right Rev. Dr. Moran arrived in Oamaru on the previous Saturday, and on Sunday morning at 11 o'clock celebrated High Mass in the chapel, assisted by the Rev. Father Burke and Mr Lynch. After Mass his Lordship administered the sacrament of confirmation, and before doing so addressed those who came forward to receive it on their duties and privileges. In so doing his Lordship alluded to the importance of proper preparation for the reception of so great a sacrament, which, like all the others, bore a very close relationship to the Divine Redeemer. "For that reason" he said, "it is most important in itself, most honorable to you, and most necessary to your spiritual life. In order to attain that spiritual life, you stand in need of the grace of God because of yourselves you can do nothing. The graces of which you stand in need, cost the Divine Redeemer very dear indeed; and in order that you may place upon them a proper value you should bear that in mind. He is not a mere man—not a creature, however exalted,—not a sovereign, or king, or emperor of this earth, but one infinitely greater; King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; the creator of the whole world, and the master of all things. He is the great being who had no beginning and will have no end; for He exists by the force of His own nature, and from eternity to eternity. Yet exalted as He is, and all sufficient in Himself, so much did He love his fallen creatures that He became a man; so that by so doing, He might be a sacrifice for your sins, and earn for you an eternal crown. Could there be any greater kindness or stronger manifestations of love? By His suffering and death He accomplished the great mystery for which He came—the sacrifice for our sins. And in order that each individual sharer in fallen nature should become a sharer in His graces, He established the sacraments, of which you are about to receive one. These are the channels of the graces of God; having their source in His wounded side, in the Sacred Heart on the cross, and they stretch on, as it were, from age to age throughout the entire world, to the souls of the individuals who receive them, and who are prepared to receive them. One of these sacraments is confirmation, which makes you strong and perfect Christians; communicating to you personally the Holy Ghost, who brings with Him the gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and the fear of the Lord, and imprints a character not to be blotted out. It gives also a special grace to enable you to confess your faith openly and manfully, to resist all the assaults made against it by the world, the devil, and your own passions. The special importance of this sacrament arises from the fact that it was specially intended to strengthen you in faith, the most important of the virtues, which is called by the Council of Trent the root and foundation of justification, and without which, according to St. Paul, it is impossible to please God. You see, therefore, how great this sacrament is, and what wonderful blessings it bestows on those who receive it worthily; what a high honour it confers upon them, bringing them into intimate connection with the third person of the eternal Trinity, and making them the soldiers of the Divine Redeemer. To be sharers in these blessings it is necessary for those who receive this sacrament to be properly prepared, and therefore those who come to years of discretion should be instructed in their religion, so that they may understand what they are doing, and be enabled to act rationally in ratifying the promises made for them by their sponsors in baptism. Hence the importance of the catechism, and of the instructions preparatory to confirmation. In addition, it is necessary to be in a state of grace, that is—to be free from mortal sin, and to be in this state it is necessary for all those who are to be confirmed to go to confession and receive absolution. All the sacraments confer on those in proper disposition to receive them what are termed the sacramental graces; but, as there are no limits to the bounty of God, there are many other graces which may be received by those whose dispositions are of a higher order. Those who are prepared best receive most graces, and those who are less well prepared will receive less; and those whose hope, faith and charity are not very ardent will be, perhaps, put off with the sacramental grace only. When you consider the many difficulties you have to encounter on the road to heaven you ought to be zealous to obtain all the graces you possibly can. And I now exhort you to enliven your piety in order that you may receive this sacrament with the plenitude of its graces."

His Lordship then administered the sacrament, and afterwards addressed the recipients as follows:—

"I have to impress upon you the importance of thanksgiving: You have received a great gift and a singular grace. Christ has confirmed you; given you out of His own sacred heart the grace to enable you to profess your faith, to believe with greater tenacity than before, and to resist all the assaults that can be made on your faith. You are bound to return thanks to Almighty God for having given you this sacrament; you will, therefore, set apart some little portion of to-day for that special purpose. During that time you will thank Him, and ask Him to bless you till the end of your lives; to give you grace to be good Christians and fervent Catholics: zealous for the promotion of the honour and glory of God, for your own salvation and that of your neighbour. And while you do this, don't forget to offer up a little prayer for the Bishop who has administered to you this sacrament."

His Lordship then addressed the crowded congregation as follows:—

"I have to congratulate you on two points; first, in reference to what we have witnessed to-day. The church has been full at the various services, and I feel confident I do not exaggerate in saying that everyone present at the two first Masses received Holy Communion. Numbers went to confession yesterday and were strength-

ened to-day with the bread of life. This is the aim towards the obtaining of which all our labours are directed, and to behold such a sight as this on any Sunday in the year, is to the priest his greatest consolation, and constitutes his crown. I have to congratulate you on this, and to say that I have not words sufficient to express my delight in seeing such a manifestation of faith and piety. It only remains for me to pray God to give you the grace of perseverance in these holy practices, and impress upon you the importance of perseverance. It must be a consolation and a happiness to feel yourselves either confirmed in, or restored to fellowship with God, and strengthened with the bread, not of angels, for they have not been favoured as you have been, but with the bread of eternal life spoken of by Christ here, as we read in St. John's Gospel, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day." By receiving the sacrament of penance you shall be purified through the blood of your Divine Redeemer and washed clean from every stain of sin, whilst the Eucharist will be the food of your souls, and strengthen you to enable you in this life to discharge your duties and to resist the assaults made upon you by your enemies. I pray, therefore, that this scene may be often repeated in this church, and that you will resolve to be regular and frequent communicants, and to be always prepared to die and appear before the Judge of the living and the dead. The second point upon which I have to congratulate you, is the establishment of a convent in your midst. This is now an accomplished fact; and the glory, the credit, and the reward will be yours, for it is your generosity, inspired by your faith, that has enabled it to be established. It will be to you a source of innumerable blessings; your children will now be brought up in the knowledge and fear and love of God; and your girls especially will be educated under proper auspices. They will not only be taught to be fit for the discharge of their duties in this life, but their manners will be improved, and, above all, their souls will be so prepared to be a sight on which the eye of God himself will love to dwell with complacency. The boys also will share in the benefit up to a certain age. We have, so to speak, stretched a point to allow them to be taught in the convent school up to the age of 10 years. During that time a foundation of religion and piety will be laid, and the rudiments of secular education will be imparted to them in such a way that their further progress will be rapid. You will also have the example of these holy ladies before you whose lives will be a most eloquent sermon; and there is nothing of more importance than good example. Beyond these advantages which I have enumerated, there are many more on which it is now unnecessary for me to touch. I wish, however, to avail myself of this opportunity to speak on another subject intimately connected with that to which I have just alluded. During the early part of the recent session of Parliament, a Bill was brought into the House of Representatives, having for its object, amongst other things, our relief from the heavy burden imposed on us by the law of education in this colony. Our position is an exceptional one, as we are subjected, in consequence of our principles, to very serious disabilities. As citizens we are bound to pay our share of the taxation of the country, and to provide out of it for the free education of the children of the country. Now, if our principles permitted us to avail ourselves of the educational system that is according to the law of the land we should be spared considerable expense and trouble; but if we do not avail ourselves of it, this very fact is a convincing proof that we abstain because it is impossible for us to do otherwise consistently with the obligation that we owe to Almighty God according to our principles and conscience. Instead of provoking angry opposition this action on our part ought to conciliate respect from others, and to induce them to do everything in their power to help us. Instead of this being the case, I regret to say our abstaining from what I term, and have always termed, countenancing godless schools, has provoked the hatred and opposition of the patrons of those schools. This appears to be extraordinary, because the opposite sentiments ought to be engendered, particularly when it is borne in mind that the motive for our conduct is not one of opposition to the authorities of the country, but a motive arising from the obligation we owe to God, and to the highest interests of our children. In consequence of this state of things your leaders in every part of the colony have never ceased to demand, on your part, some aid out of the public funds for the maintenance of Catholic schools. This is a most just and reasonable demand on their part, and one that ought not to be resisted. Our demands for justice, however, are received not only in a spirit of opposition, but in a spirit that I do not care to designate. I hold in my hand a statement made by one of our opponents, and I will read a few extracts from it in order that you may form your own opinion of them. Recently the TABLET, a newspaper for the existence of which you ought to thank Almighty God, in arguing the question very temperately, stated that as we are a seventh of the community, we are entitled to a seventh of the educational expenditure for our own schools. And are we not entitled to a fair share of the expenditure for our own schools? Why should the amount contributed by us be spent on schools for other people's children, whilst not a penny is spent on our own? It is a most unjust and iniquitous proceeding, and one against which we are entitled to raise our voices. And we shall never cease to agitate against such a policy, because it is nothing more nor less than public plunder and downright robbery. These are strong words, but the poverty of the English language is so great that there are no other words in which to describe the injustice done to the Catholic body in this colony. The article in the TABLET went further, in stating that in the last four years nearly two millions of money had been spent on godless schools, and the Catholics had a right to demand restitution. This also is a most just and equitable demand; for of all the money spent in these four years, not one shilling has been spent for the purpose of the education of Catholics. The Catholics, as a body, have steadfastly kept away from all participation in the expenditure of money on the godless schools; and have emphasised their protest by erecting and continuing to erect schools of their own in every part of the country. Whilst so doing, they have been also paying towards the maintenance of public schools; and this amounts to a double tax on