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MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIII. TO THE N.Z. TABLET.

Pergant Directores et Scriptores New Zealand Tablet, Apostolica Benedictione confortati, Religionis et Justitiæ causam promovere per vias Veritatis et Pacis.
Die 4 Aprilis, 1900.

LEO XIII., P.M.

TRANSLATION.—Fortified by the Apostolic Blessing, let the Directors and Writers of the New Zealand Tablet continue to promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the ways of Truth and Peace.
April 4, 1900.

LEO XIII., Pope.

Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

THINGS TO REMEMBER. THERE is many a gem of thought of purest ray serene in the admirable papers contributed to the great Catholic Congress whose sittings were recently so happily terminated in Sydney. Several of the papers will be published in full in our columns. Among the others we would single out for honorable mention the admirable paper contributed by the gifted Coadjutor Bishop of Hobart on 'The Relation of the Church to the non-Catholic World in Australia.' 'Australia,' says the distinguished writer in one place—and his remarks apply also in a great measure to New Zealand—'is a land of peace and gladness. In its social atmosphere there is something like the breath of spring, something that thickens the pulse and brightens the eye, that draws people together in genial mood and sets them looking ever for the bright side of men and things. No people are so unwearied in cordial appreciation of all desert, whether corporate or individual, and no people are more sincerely sympathetic in those frailties that sometimes surprise the well-meaning. Such is one leading quality of Australian character—a benevolent brightness. Such likewise is the special character generated by the Catholic Church. Catholic England was Merrie England. If the elements which the Church strove to combine were of their nature refractory, if her ideals were rudely arrested in their realisation by regal violence, feudal turbulence, and baronial greed, nevertheless the all-pervading spirit of the time was one of inextinguishable glee. In spite of Lollard acrimony, Chaucer's times are as genial as a morning in May. It was the same throughout all the nations of the North in the days of Catholic unity. Even into the precincts of the sanctuary we trace the radiant humor of the time. The great constructive genius of that age relaxes at every turn in some quaint touch of lightheartedness, which shows how sunny the hearts of the people must have been. As for the Catholic South then and later, its very excess of gaiety has been an unpardonable scandal to prudens and puritans; and, finally, even to this day, Catholic Ireland has, it is well known, often touched the deepest sympathies of the whole world for the easy cheerfulness with which the people bear misfortune not wholly of their own making.'

The people of these colonies, says the same writer, 'are much more than tolerant of the Catholic Church. In half a century the Church has accumulated an enormous amount of wealth in lands, buildings, such as churches, presbyteries, colleges, schools, hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged, the blind, the deaf and dumb. And the annual cost in the up-keep of them is almost staggering, taken in the aggregate, and considering that all the money, both for foundation and maintenance, has to come pretty well from voluntary contributions. The Catholics of Australia are not certainly the depositaries of the nation's wealth; yet no other denomination can show an annual expenditure to approach ours, especially on works such as schools and orphanages and homes, which do not properly fall under the head of religious service. No doubt the Church has within its system an unequalled economic resource. Our Orders and congregations of men and women

enable us to cope with difficulties on a vast scale. And the general body of the Catholic laity, especially those who work for their livelihood, are generous, magnificently generous. Yet, when all is said, we must own, and indeed we are proud to own, that not a little of the money which stands to the credit of Catholic institutions comes out of the pockets of Australians who are not themselves Catholics.'

Referring to the number of converts to the Church in these colonies the same Right Reverend writer says: 'So far as I am aware, no statistics are kept beyond the baptismal entries, and these should be separately kept and posted in each parish to enable us to say what the aggregate conversions are each year. But enough has come under my personal observation for some years in two colonies to warrant me in saying that, taken all round, the actual total is respectable. Many of these conversions are occasioned by marriage, but this does not alter the fact that for the most part they are genuine. But what it is important to note is this, that year by year the Church is drawing into her net, or to change the figure, is leavening with Catholic faith an evergrowing number of families which for generations were alien and hostile. I have repeatedly tabulated the names of candidates for Confirmation in many districts, and have been surprised at the large percentage of other than Irish origin. No doubt in most instances the faith of the children is due to the Irish mother or grandmother; but the fact still remains, and is very significant, that the faith is thus assimilating material which has been all but refractory. This fact is helping likewise to neutralise the general prejudice against the Church as a sort of national badge. It has certainly been God's will to plant the Church in these colonies through the agency of the Irish, both priest and people; and no zeal for Catholicity, no Australian patriotism calls for the repudiation of a debt registered in the Book of Life itself. If the Church is to prosper in Australia she will be bound not to forget the rock out of which she has been hewn; undutifulness cannot but displease Him who attached a blessing to the fulfilment of the commandment which bids us honor our father and mother. But the converse truth is equally important to remember. If God has granted our race the privilege of planting His tabernacles in these new lands, He has not thereby entailed His inheritance to us for all time. Our glory no man shall take from us, but we must not presume to trespass on divinely set franchises. No man ever lived who possessed warmer human sympathies, stronger race feelings than St. Paul; yet he fought stubbornly for the freedom of other races than his own, whom it was his mission to lead into the inheritance of the truth. And for this reason—which has always weighed so much with the Catholic Church—I hail with delight the rapid enrolment into the ranks of the Catholic Church in Australia of names that recall the Severn and the Thames, the Humber and the Tweed, side by side with my fellow-countrymen from the banks of the Blackwater and the Shannon. Even though Irish mothers have drawn them into the Church with cords of Adam, their very presence helps on important work: it serves to bring into relief the Church's Catholicity.'

'What,' says he in conclusion, 'are we doing to help on the conversion of Australia?' A great deal. I am quite sure that nothing better could be projected to secure that end than