

The Federation is the layman's apostolate in the Kingdom of God on earth. There is an attitude of mind which leaves God's interests to the priest, whilst it sets itself steadily to the concerns of the world. But it is a mistaken and mean-spirited attitude, and falls very far short of the ideals of the Kingdom's Divine Founder. A Catholic layman cannot leave God's interests to the priests. The priests have their work to do in the Sanctuary, the pulpit, the confessional. But there is also work to be done by priest and laymen side by side, and other fields where the layman must work by himself. If the Church is not OF this world—how could it have lasted if it were?—it is most unmistakably IN this world. "It touches every point of the world: it shoulders its way in wherever the world is gathered; it is not desirous to keep low or to bate 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 party." Hence there is work for the Catholic layman to do, with the Bishops and priests, or by himself; and he must either do it or leave it undone; fight for it, or fight against it. He that gathereth not, scattereth: he that is not with Me, is against Me.

The first indispensable element of a lay apostolate is of course a truly Christian character. Catholic men and women who wish to discharge their honorable and onerous duties must first order their lives in conformity with the Divine teachings and sublime morality of their religion. The lay apostle who sets out to defend his faith without taking the trouble to live up to it is like a fallen angel donning the livery of a saint, a bankrupt lecturing on success in business, a beggar on finance, or Judas Iscariot preaching on fidelity. The world quickly labels the politician who attends Mass on Sunday and goes his corrupt ways for the rest of the week, or the prominent official of a Catholic society who has no scruples in business: "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." Purity of private life, however, will not suffice. The Catholic layman has other obligations. The Church to which he belongs stands on the same footing—not to say a higher footing—as his country or his native land. He must treat the Church as a Mother, and be proud to do her service as he is glad to serve his country. He knows that the object of his religion is to guide man in all his undertakings,—in the family, in business, and his civic relations to the government—and he is happy to recognise and satisfy its strong claims to his efforts and services. He will not stand aloof from his Bishop or pastors, who are divinely appointed to touch spiritual things closely and directly. He will generously and sympathetically recognise their burdens and their labors. He will be loyal and ready, prepared to take trouble, to put his own feelings aside and place himself at their service. Priests are always in need of lay help, ever glad when it comes, and, alas, often have to do without it. "Yet there is no exercise of brotherly love," writes a bishop of wide experience, "so meritorious as genuine love of one's pastor; no work of self-denial so needful as the drill and self-control which enable a man to work with his priest; and no wisdom or philosophy so noble or 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." In helping the Catholic laity to do their share of this work it would be difficult to find any other society so nobly inspired and so skilfully planned as the Catholic Federation. The ordinary government of the Church does what it undertakes smoothly and noiselessly, according to maxims which the experience of ages has ratified; nor is there anywhere in the world a system more exquisitely contrived in its various and complicated machinery. But the executive from time to time will meet strange difficulties when a new era is begun. Beyond all question such an era has opened under our eyes, and the

Catholic Hierarchy calls on the Catholic laity to do their part in solving these difficulties through the Catholic Federation. Will the appeal go unheard or unanswered?

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Is there any necessity for the Catholic Federation? If the question comes like the crack of a rifle, the answer sounds like the boom of a French 75. Even though there were no rights of ours insultingly ignored or unjustly denied, the Catholic Federation would do good every day of its life, for in the last analyses its mission is to secure the layman's part in helping to make this beloved country of ours Catholic. We have inherited a magnificent estate and the noblest name in history, and we want to make the strangers of other faiths our brothers and coheirs. That is a duty we owe to our faith, to ourselves, to the world around us, a duty of the highest civilisation as well as of a perfect Christianity. And are there no rights to be won? No claims of ours to be put before the outside public? No unspeakable calumnies to be refuted through the press, the platform, and the public libraries? Have we no school question? No Catholic literature to foster as an antidote against the poisonous gas that is poured over the world day by day by those, the enormous majority, who have scarcely any conviction so strong as that the Church is in the wrong? Does it ever strike Catholic laymen that their amusements in the theatres and picture-palaces are provided by those who believe almost nothing that we believe, and who have little, if any faith in God or God's commandments, certainly none in His Church or her right to guard our conduct? Are the helpless orphans who cannot fight their own corner to be handed over body and soul to some department of a Government which has officially annihilated God and can never love the poor for Christ's sweet sake, the Poor Man of Nazareth? Has the Church of the poor no interest in seeing the right of the working-man to a just wage and comfortable conditions of work and life wrung from shameless profiteers?

To ask these questions is to answer them. Indeed they are only set down here to remind the Catholic laity that "eternal vigilance is the price of equality of citizenship" and that a strong Catholic Federation can alone secure the necessary eternal vigilance. Here is what Sydney Smith had to say almost a century ago: "The mild and the long-suffering may suffer for ever in this world. If the Catholics (under O'Connell) had stood with their hands before them, simpering at the Earls of Liverpool and the Lords Bathurst of the moment, they would not have been emancipated till the year of our Lord 4000. As long as the patient will suffer, the cruel will kick. . . . If they go on withholding and forbearing and hesitating whether this is the time for the discussion or that is the time, they will be laughed at for another century as fools and kicked for another century as slaves."

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It cannot be too often repeated that the aims of the Catholic Federation are religious and in no way political: it would bring us all together "shield to shield, helm to helm, man to man" for religious purposes only. In matters political the Church leaves us a free hand. It does happen indeed that in questions which claim to be merely political—our school question, for example—there is really involved some deeper question of faith or morals. We cannot rightly claim our freedom here, for God has not given us freedom to believe what is false or to disregard His commandments. But apart from these matters we are free: in politics the Church is free herself, she does not bind us and we must not try to bind one another. The doors of the Catholic Church are thrown wide open to all: she belongs to all alike who belong to her. All that she has to give is for poor and rich alike. And so the Catholic Federation can be used for no cause except the common cause of the Catholic religion. That is the emphatic rule of the society and we challenge the bitterest foe to show that

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