

## How Catholic England Celebrated Christmas

Outside the "great solemn abbeys"—as the great monastic houses were described by the plundering commissioners of Henry VIII.—Christmas for the average lay Catholic begins with the Midnight Mass of Christmas Eve. But actually the first ceremonial act of Christmas takes place many hours before midnight, at Prime on the morning of Christmas Eve, when the monastics, vested in rich copes and accompanied with lighted tapers and smoking censers, gather round the great lectern that stands in the middle of their chapter house for the solemn chanting of the Christmas Martyrology, which is always read a day in advance.

It is a wonderful roll of dates and events, this Christmas Martyrology. It begins with the Creation of the World, and it traverses in the most thrilling and colorful terms all the greatest happenings in the progress and development of mankind. Strict purists in chronology might query some of the dates; only a heretic would question the facts. And these events, with the numbering of the years that have passed, pass in rapid succession with an excitement that gathers force as the prefigurings of the Incarnation draw closer to that central fact in the world's history. The Cantor at the lectern changes his note to a higher tone, and in the midst of his monastic brethren in the chapter house he cries aloud that: "To-day, in Bethlehem of Judah, the Word was made Flesh." And all fall on their knees in anticipatory adoration of the Incarnate Christ.

This is the first ushering in of Christmas, which takes place in many a monastic house of Great Britain on the morning of the Vigil. And, outside the abbeys and monastic houses, in the heart of London at Westminster Cathedral the lay folk assist at this ceremony as it is celebrated in the choir by the College of Chaplains. After this there followed the penitential exercises of the Vigil.

His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop pontificated at the first Vespers of Christmas, and later, at about an hour before midnight, the doors of the Metropolitan Cathedral were opened to admit the faithful to Matins, which preceded the Midnight Mass, celebrated by Bishop Butt in the presence of the Cardinal, at which the Cathedral was crowded to the doors. Prime on Christmas morning was chanted by the chaplains, followed by the High Mass of the Aurora. Then, later on in the morning, there was the Christmas Mass *In Nativitate Domini*, celebrated by the Cardinal Archbishop, who was surrounded by the whole Archiepiscopal Curia, with gentlemen-of-honor and lay dignitaries of the Papal Court in attendance.

Throughout the entire country, England and Wales and Scotland, from our great Cathedral cathedrals and magnificent abbey churches down to the newest and poorest of the mission churches, there was practically not a single Catholic church or conventual chapel in Great Britain without its Midnight Mass. No going out into the highways and hedges here and compelling the people to come in. The difficulty was to find room for the vast crowds that would have overflowed the churches beyond their capacity, and so in every case admission to the Midnight Mass was by ticket only. Cribs were everywhere, and one of the most touching of all these beautiful ceremonies of Christmas was the carrying of the Bambino from the high altar to the manger after the High Mass of midnight.

But, for romance, in which Nature unassisted took the most prominent part, it would have been necessary to have spent the festival with the Benedictine monks at their home on Caldey Island, off the coast of South Wales. The weather prophets had predicted gales, and their prophecies came to pass in abundance. Fierce storms blew up from the Atlantic, their howlings vying with the thundering crash of bells from the abbey tower.

Cut off from the rest of the world by raging seas, as the monks of Caldey were, the calm dignity of the beautiful ceremonies in their abbey church were the greatest contrast imaginable to the fierce shrieking of the wind as it swept across their island, or the dash of the sea spray as it was flung wildly against the painted windows of the monastic church, founded on the rock secure amidst the boiling waves of an angry sea.

Outside the Church Christianity may have failed, as some of our modern critics declare it has. But the Catholic heart of the country beats true as ever, and the Christmas festival which has just passed has seen the Catholic churches more crowded than ever. Which is inevitable, since room has to be found somewhere for the ten thousand or so converts which are added yearly to the Faith in Britain.—*Catholic News Service.*

## In Honor of the Social Reign of Our Divine Lord. APPEAL TO THE POPE.

Over 341 cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and superiors; general of religious Orders have addressed an appeal to the Holy Father asking the establishment of a feast in honor of the Social Reign of Jesus Christ. This appeal states that so far back as 1899 the same desire was expressed by five cardinals, one of whom was the future Pius X. Eighty-nine archbishops and bishops of Italy and South America also joined in the petition. The request was favorably received by Leo XIII., and transmitted by the Cardinal Vicar to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. The same Episcopacy also asked the Holy Father for a Mass and Office in honor of the Social Reign of Jesus Christ. The idea of the Social Reign of Jesus Christ has been in continual progress for half a century, and it has been studied under every form, from a doctrinal point of view as well as in its practical realisations at the International Eucharistic Congress. The feast was specially petitioned for in three reports of the International Eucharistic Congress of Lourdes held in July, 1914, at which the Papal Legate presided, and 189 cardinals, archbishops, and bishops assisted. The feast, if established, would be an acknowledgment of the sacred and inprescriptible rights of Our Divine Lord over mankind and a homage from Christian hearts as well as a just reparation for the apostasy of nations.—*Irish Catholic.*

## Obituary

MR. TERENCE McCABE, AUCKLAND.

There passed away at the Thames Hospital on the 8th inst., a very much respected and practical Catholic, in the person of Mr. Terence McCabe (writes a correspondent). Mr. McCabe for some years was farming at Turna, and while there was a very active worker for the Church. He left for Auckland a few years ago, and recently visited Turna, where he became ill. He was brought to the Thames Hospital about three weeks ago and after a short illness, borne with Christian fortitude, he passed away. During his illness he was attended by Rev. Father Dignan, who also officiated at the graveside.—R.I.P.

MR. PETER LOFTUS, WELLINGTON.

Another of the fast-diminishing band of early settlers, in the person of Mr. Peter Loftus, passed away at his residence, 26 Ohiro Road, Wellington, on February 1 (writes a correspondent). The deceased was born in 1843 at Loughrea, Co. Galway, Ireland, which county he left at an early age to live for some years in Wigan, Lancashire. Joining the 57th Regiment at the age of 16, he served for a period in the Old Country, proceeding thence to India, and finally, in 1861, to New Zealand. He saw service in the Waikato and Taranaki districts, and took part in the storming of the pah at Otapawa, Te Ngutu-o-te-mani, and sundry other engagements. Later, when the regiment was ordered home he took his discharge, and settled in Wanganui in the retail boot business. At the re-commencement of hostilities he joined the New Zealand Militia, and served with them till the Maori trouble ended. Retiring from business some years ago, he left Wanganui in 1914, and took up his residence in Wellington. During his last illness he was attended by the Rev. Fathers Mahony and Murphy, and died fortified by the last rites of Holy Church. The funeral took place at Wanganui, where his wife, who died some years ago, was laid to rest. Rev. Father Outtrim officiated at St. Mary's Church, Wanganui, and at the graveside. An adult family of five sons and three daughters are left to mourn their loss.—R.I.P.

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