

NEW CHURCH AT TAPANUI.

THE OPENING CEREMONIES.

(Special report.)

THE opening and blessing of the new church at Tapanui last Sunday was the crowning event in the history of a plucky undertaking of which the few and scattered Catholics of that district may be reasonably proud. The work was undertaken by eight Catholic families, few of whom are blessed with a plethora of the world's goods, and the result of their efforts and self-sacrifice, coupled with the altogether admirable practical goodwill and support of their non-Catholic neighbours, has been the erection of a singularly handsome church building which involved an expenditure of £300, and was on last Sunday solemnly opened with only about £30 or £40 of its total cost unpaid. The building stands upon a three-quarter acre section, securely fenced, on what is claimed to be one of the best sites in the town, and presents a bright and handsome appearance. The following are the descriptive particulars of the new building, which is a conspicuous ornament to the town:—

The church is in the Gothic style of architecture, and its pleasing proportions show out to great advantage. The building will accommodate a congregation of about 300. The material used in the construction is timber, on a concrete foundation. It is about 40ft in length, exclusive of the sanctuary (12ft) and a porch (8ft). The width is 22ft. The windows—sixteen altogether—are furnished with cathedral glass of pleasing design and subdued colours, and the sanctuary is lighted by a triple lancet oriel window. The interior is very artistically stained and varnished, the colours used being in excellent taste, and the window facings and doors are tastefully grained. A massive wooden altar, of handsome construction, adds considerably to the beauty of the interior. The belfry, which stands on four massive pillars, is surmounted by a Celtic cross, and rises to the height of 40ft. The church on the whole is a fine specimen of ecclesiastical architecture, the workmanship being especially good. Mr. Thomas Carmody, of Gore, was the contractor, and he carried out his work to the entire satisfaction of the pastor and congregation. The painting was done in a very tasteful manner by Mr. John Fleming, of Tapanui.

Perfect weather favoured the opening ceremony. The church was crowded to excess by a congregation consisting chiefly of non-Catholics, whose large-hearted generosity and kindly sympathy with the good work formed the theme of grateful comment by the Catholics of the district, by Father P. O'Donnell (the priest in charge of the mission), and by the preachers at Mass and evening devotions. The offerings on the occasion of the opening reached a sum of about £50. A strong choir from Gore conducted the musical portion of the services in a very pleasing manner. Mrs. Neave acted as organist, and at the Mass sang Gounod's 'Ave Maria' as an offertory. Mr. Johnson rendered Bordeese's 'O Salutaris.' The music at Benediction was also well chosen and admirably rendered. The celebrant of the Mass was the Very Rev. Dean Mackay, Administrator of the Diocese. There were also present the Very Rev. Father O'Neill (Milton), Father P. O'Donnell (Gore), and Fathers Coffey and Cleary (Dunedin).

FATHER O'NEILL'S SERMON.

The occasional sermon at the Mass was delivered by the Very Rev. Father O'Neill, and was marked by great power. He took as his text the words of St. Matthew xiv. 18: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' The very rev. preacher pointed out the object for which the Church was instituted—to convey to souls to the end of time the graces which the Redeemer purchased by His death on the cross. In that mission she could not fail. Her continuance was predicted by the angel when he told her that the Holy One that would be born to her should rule over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there would be no end. A like declaration was made by our Lord when He sent forth His apostles to teach all nations, with the promise: 'Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world'—not till the Church should become corrupted, but for all time: 'till the consummation of the world.' Therefore we maintain that decay or corruption in doctrine is impossible in the Church which Christ established. To assert such decay would either mean that Christ was untrue to His word, which would be blasphemy to assert; or it would mean that He had not the power to keep His promise and save His Church from the gates of hell. The Church, then, must continue till the end of time pure in her teaching, in her practice, in her principles and motives, no matter how individuals within her may fall away. History has vindicated this, and for almost 1900 years has revealed the fulfilment of the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ. From the days of the apostles to our own time dissensions have arisen within the Church and troubles from her enemies outside. But St. Peter's barque has come safe through all the storms of 1900 years. During the first 800 years of the Church's life no fewer than ten general persecutions were let loose on the Christians. The full power of the mighty Roman Empire was directed to sweep them off the earth. They were flung to wild beasts, with garments soaked in pitch they were turned into flaming lamps at night. They were made the sport of Roman rabble. But through persecution the Church only spread the more, and in very truth and deed 'the blood of martyrs became the seed of Christians.' The preacher then went on to describe the use and fate of the early heresies—of the Arians, the Nestorians, etc., how they spread over the Christian world, flourished for a time, and then died away, leaving the Church's marvellous strength and unity unimpaired. He then dealt in some detail with the causes which led to the more recent and great religious revolt of the sixteenth century, which originated in Germany through the pride, ambition, and disappointed hopes of an ex-friar, who found the restraints of his

vows too irksome. Backed by the secular power, he drew away nearly one-half of the population of Germany from the unity of the Catholic faith. The spirit of revolt spread to England and Scotland, and out those two old Catholic lands adrift from the rock on which the Church of Christ was built. That was 301 years ago. Since then men have tried in vain to find that the Catholic Church has altered in one tittle from the articles of faith taught in the days of the Apostles. The Church has remained unchanged and unchangeable through all the ages. She teaches in the nineteenth century the same doctrine as she taught in apostolic days. From time to time she has to explain her doctrines in more concise terms. But, as in the case of the dogmas of Papal infallibility and the Immaculate Conception, these doctrines were always believed in the Church, and formed part of the deposit of truth left by Christ to His Apostles.

The preacher then pointed out how the Catholic Church was the only form of Christianity known in England and Scotland for 1500 years. He dwelt long and lovingly on the tangible proofs of the faith and zeal of the people of the pre-Reformation days, which were still to be seen in the magnificent temples and monasteries—many in ruins—which were dotted over England and Scotland. Abuses existed—for human nature is frail. But the Reformation was not caused by abuses, but by the rampant greed and lust of one man. The preacher concluded with an eloquent peroration on the great work of church-building, which linked those present to their fathers of the pre-Reformation days, and paid a grateful and happy tribute to non-Catholics who had aided so effectively in the erection of that handsome edifice to the honour of the Most High.

FATHER COFFEY'S SERMON.

In the evening the occasional sermon was preached by Father Coffey (Dunedin) from the text of Genesis: 'Verily this is the house of God.' In the course of a singularly able and impressive discourse, which the limits of our space prevent us giving in any detail, the rev. preacher explained the objects of church-building—chief of which is the providing of a place where the great Sacrifice of the New Law shall be offered up. He then proceeded to define Sacrifice, and to point out that it differed from every other act of honour of which man is capable in that it may be offered to God alone and in testimony of His infinite power over us and of our total dependence on Him. The history of Sacrifice was traced up under the Jewish dispensation; in happy and convincing terms the various prophecies regarding the 'clean oblation' of the New Dispensation were one by one passed under review; and then their grand fulfilment was shown in Christ's great Sacrifice on Calvary. The preacher then showed how Christ on that first Good Friday offering Himself once and in one place only, and that the great predicted Sacrifice of the New Law was to be offered in every place and time; and proved that the fulfilment of the prophecies was to be found in the Sacrifice of the Mass. It fulfils all the conditions of a true Sacrifice—a visible offering, made by a legitimate minister duly appointed, in testimony of God's supreme dominion over us. The rev. preacher then proved the identity of the Sacrifice of the Mass with that of Calvary; dealt in detail with the four great purposes for which the Mass is offered; and concluded with an admirable exposition of the spirit with which Catholics should assist at this great and supreme act of religious worship.

ST. DOMINIC'S COLLEGE, DUNEDIN.

ST. JOSEPH'S HALL was crowded on Monday afternoon on the occasion of the annual breaking-up entertainment by and the distribution of prizes to the pupils of St. Dominic's College, Dunedin. Among those present were the Revs. Fathers Murphy, O'Donnell, Moloney, and Ryan, and Messrs Fitzgerald, Bessence and Richardson.

On such occasions the parents and friends of the pupils attend for the purpose of seeing for themselves what has been the result of the year's work, and if the finished manner in which all the items on the programme were performed is to be taken as a criterion of the class of education imparted at the College, the standard is certainly high, and can well stand the test of criticism. The programme opened with two action songs, 'Out on the deep' and 'Jeux de cerceaux,' by the kindergarten. The scene on the stage was a pretty one, the boys being attired in sailor costume of white and pale blue, and the girls in white, the latter carrying hoops with coloured ribbons and bells. The performers kept good time, and the songs were nicely rendered. A number of the senior pupils sang in a finished manner Abt's 'Water Lilies.' The College has always been noted for the high state of proficiency attained by the pupils in instrumental music, and the duet from Weber on three pianos by Misses Seelye, O'Connell, Kelman, Heenan, Delargy, and Joyce was certainly a very artistic performance and more than maintained the reputation of the institution. A feature of the performance was the splendid time—so accurate was this that it appeared as if the volume of sound came from a single instrument. Miss G. Meenan possesses a very sweet voice, and her 'Song of sleep' gave promise that she will become a very good vocalist. The college boarders contributed a calisthenic display, two of them practising on 'Sandow developers.' Miss Davis's solo, 'The Swallows,' was sung with taste, and was a very fine example of good vocalisation. Miss G. O'Connell gave a recitation, in which clear enunciation and appropriate action were marked features. Miss F. Courtis played a pianoforte solo with faultless execution, her touch being clear and telling. A mazurka of Chopin was played brilliantly by Misses Paton, E. Ward, and A. Liston, the performers giving evidence of finished tuition by their splendid time and good touch. Miss Ewing has a rich contralto voice, which showed to great advantage in the solo, 'The Soul's Awakening.' It is rare to meet with one so young who possesses such a rich contralto voice. Miss Ewing has evidently a future before her as a vocalist. A pianoforte duet, 'Bohemian Dances,' was played with taste and feeling by Misses G. Meenan, E