

"But he that shall scandalise one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea" (St. Matth., 18, 6). How many children learn from the example of their own parents habits of sinful language, of ungoverned anger, of neglect of the sacred duties of religion; and although these same parents may salve their consciences by frequently exhorting their children to duty and virtue, they cannot expect to escape the anger of God, Who is jealous of the virtue of the little ones He has entrusted to their care.

Influence of Companionship and Reading

Another frequent cause of the early loss of innocence in childhood is the example of those around them, and especially of the companions of their own age. How sensitive parents would be in keeping their little ones from any companion infected with bodily disease of a contagious nature! If they are less careful in choosing companions whose conversation and conduct is free from the contagion of vice, do they not show a strange perversion of judgment? Some parents are very careless in guarding their children from the evil influences of books and papers. There are many printed things which grown-up people may read with impunity, but which should be forbidden to children. And there is, alas! in our midst much printed matter that should be forbidden to any Catholic or decent man, and it is carelessly allowed to fall into the hands of innocent children. Again let us remark the difference of care bestowed on the body and on the soul. Parents who would not think any care too great to ensure the soundness and purity of the food they put on the family table, have little or no scruple in allowing their children, to poison their minds with bad reading.

It is a rare thing, but not unknown, for parents to show a want of respect for their children by exposing in their homes pictures that one might excuse in the house of a pagan, but would never expect to see in a Christian home. Here again, parents should reflect that what may do them no greater harm than to betray to visitors their bad taste, may be an occasion of scandal to the young. Let parents rather adorn their homes with the best pictures they can procure, and let the religious subjects be not inferior to the secular. Thus they will at the same time teach their own household to know and respect sacred things, and profess openly to all that their religion is one of which nobody need be ashamed.

Religious, Charitable, and Benefit Societies

Our age is one of combines and unions of every kind and for every purpose, and it is universally recognised that the best way to acquire strength and permanency is to join individual forces in a union. The Catholic Church, herself a divinely-constituted and necessary society, in keeping with the spirit of the times, blesses and fosters within her fold many voluntary unions of her children, the purpose of which is to promote more efficiently than separate individual action could, some cause of spiritual welfare or charitable help, or combined spiritual and temporal benefit. The confraternities and sodalities belong to the first of these classes, the associations of charity to the second, and the Catholic benefit societies to the third. These voluntary associations, under the different names of confraternities, sodalities, societies, or guilds, when conducted according to the purpose of their foundation, and with the necessary regularity and activity, are a source of strength and blessing, both to the individuals who join them and to the Church itself. In Australia we have an abundant supply of these associations, and we exhort you, dearly beloved brethren, to appreciate their advantages, and to make good use of them for your own and the Church's benefit.

The confraternities of the Sacred Heart, the Apostleship of Prayer, the Sodality of Children of Mary, the confraternities of the Rosary and of the Blessed Sacrament, are now very generally established throughout the Commonwealth; and there is no doubt that the incentives they furnish have gone far to produce that regularity in approaching the Holy Sacraments, which is a beautiful and consoling custom of large numbers of devout Catholics. No pastor who is truly anxious for the well-being of his parish will neglect to establish and maintain in regularity such of these sodalities as are best suited to the different needs of his people; and all Catholics who are earnestly desirous of ensuring their own regularity in the salutary practices of the Christian life will avail of the opportunity of being enrolled in a confraternity, and will carefully observe the requirements of its rules.

Charitable Organisations,

such as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, can do much good, especially in the larger centres of population. Combining as they do, in the spirit of genuine Christian charity, the relief of spiritual and of bodily needs, they are a source of numerous unrecorded blessings to the objects of their assistance as well as to the members themselves. We heartily wish to see these charitable organisations widespread and active, Young men's societies, boys' clubs, and sailors' homes combine spiritual advantages with temporal in a way that is productive of much good for the members, and afford to the zeal of their promoters a scope for exercise and a hope of success that would be unattainable but for the gathering together of the members in a union. Much, however, of the success of these works depends on the aptitude and zeal of their promoters. They are not, like the ordinary machinery of parochial administration, things that, to a large extent, will go by themselves; but, under the prudent management of directors, who are able and willing to guide them, they can do a great deal of good for a class on whose welfare much depends. Societies of this kind, however, need special care to preserve them in full Catholicity of tone and action; failing which, they cease to be of any advantage to their members or to the Church.

Benefit Societies.

which have for their object provision against the day of sickness and misfortune, are now a generally acknowledged necessity for a very large number of our Australian people. The State Governments, recognising their usefulness, have taken them under the protection of useful laws and official supervision, which go far towards securing their financial soundness. The benefit societies in Australia which are for Catholics, and have the approval and blessing of the Church, are the Hibernian-Australasian Catholic Benefit Society, the Australasian Holy Catholic Guild, and, where their amended constitutions have been adopted, the Irish National Foresters. These societies already number on their rolls some 33,500 members; and they are every day spreading into all such districts as are populous enough to maintain a branch. It is our wish that their advantages be brought to every parish, and that Catholics who join a benefit society should join only one of those established under Catholic auspices.

In conclusion, Dearly Beloved Brethren, we repeat to you the words of the Apostle: 'Watch ye; stand fast in the faith, do manfully and be strengthened. Let all your things be done in charity' (I. Cor. 16, 13). We exhort you to renew your confidence in the promises of God to His Holy Church, remembering that your trust is founded on Him Who said: 'Have confidence, I have overcome the world' (St. John, 16, 33). Keep before you constantly the Divine ideal 'to re-establish all things in Christ' (Eph. 1, 10), which St. Paul set before the first Christians, and our Holy Father Pope Pius X. has chosen as the ideal of himself and of all Christians in those days. To this end 'be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth' (Eph. 4, 25). Make sure of the one thing necessary, your eternal salvation, by the devout and persevering exercise of prayer, the frequentation of the Holy Sacraments, and the faithful discharge of the duties of your state of life. Realise how you bear in your daily lives the honor of the Christian name, and how much the conversion of those that are without depends on the edification they shall receive from you. Let the light of your faith 'so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, Who is in Heaven' (St. Matt. 5, 16). But, as it was the charity with which they loved one another attracted the admiration of those outside the Church for the faithful of the Apostolic age, so also may you best expect to re-establish in Christ those who are now without Him, by emulating amongst yourselves the Heaven-born charity of the early Christians, 'Let all your things be done in charity.'

During these days of our Council we have had the privilege of assisting at the solemn dedication of

The Noble Cathedral

which faithful hands have reared in the Mother See of Australasia to the honor of Almighty God, under the invocation of Our Lord's Immaculate Mother. The occasion is a fitting one to renew the homage to the august Queen of Heaven, which the Fathers of the first Council of the Australian Province in 1844 decreed in choosing as Patroness of Australia Our Blessed Lady, Help of Christians. We can wish you, Dearly Beloved Brethren, no greater blessing than to hope that you may ever keep yourselves under the