

St. Mary's Catholic School, Gisborne

(From an occasional correspondent.)

The extraordinary commercial development of Gisborne during the past few years and its corresponding increase in population have opened the eyes of the Catholics to the fact that parochial requirements are fast overgrowing the proportions of its old ecclesiastical institutions. This was particularly evident in the case of St. Mary's Parochial School, which was taxed to its utmost to afford accommodation for the record school roll of 1908, and, as the ever-increasing tide of population gives promise of a still more flourishing school roll for 1909, the Catholics felt that something should be done in the way of enlarging their schools to meet the growing demands of this prosperous Catholic centre. Accordingly, Very Rev. Dean Gillan, V.G., was invited to come to Gisborne last September to consult with the committee on the subject. He recommended the removal of the old school and the erection of new rooms on practically the site of the old. His recommendation was given effect to, and Gisborne is now the proud possessor of the finest Catholic school in the Auckland diocese.

The opening ceremony took place last Sunday, January 31, in the presence of a large gathering. It was performed by the Very Rev. Dean Gillan, V.G., and after he had blessed the exterior of the building the doors were opened and the large congregation entered.

The Mayor of Gisborne (Mr. W. D. Lysnar), who was present by invitation, congratulated the Catholics on the fine building that had been erected. It was, he said, a worthy object to provide education for the young, and he hoped the children would do their duty by close attention to their studies, as the parents had done theirs by erecting the building.

Brother Alley, in a very happy speech, welcomed Dean Gillan on behalf of the Hibernian Society.

The Very Rev. Dean Gillan, after expressing his pleasure at being present and his gratification at the good neighborly feeling that existed in Gisborne, and pointing out the service which Catholics rendered to the whole community in educating and forming the character of their own people, said he wished to congratulate Father Lane on the generous support he had received from his people towards the great work he had at heart, and which had that day been so successfully completed. The people had done their best, and the earnest co-operation of priest and people was a necessary thing for successful work. Their new schools were witness to the fact that the Catholic schools were not schools of the past only, but were for the future. They must, and would, hold their place in the educational work of the Dominion which no other could replace. They had no quarrel with the public schools, and in no way were they desirous to hinder their work; but what they did say was that they were not the place for Catholic children. If, as they contend, the spiritual life is higher than the temporal, that all true education rests on a religious basis, it is self-evident that Catholic children have the inalienable right to Catholic training. The enormous efforts Catholics have made the world over in raising such edifices were proof of the immense importance they attached to them, and he congratulated the Gisborne people on coming into line with their co-religionists, and appealed to the parents to make use of the schools to reinforce the work of the teachers by co-operating with them in every way in order that no Catholic child should be without a Catholic education.

The dimensions of the school now are 92ft x 35ft. It is subdivided into four class rooms. The new addition will be divided by a movable partition, so as to serve the purpose of a social hall when required. Special attention has been paid to lighting and ventilation. It was built to plans by Messrs. Wilson and Lilley, architects. Mr. Colley was the contractor. The collection taken up at the opening ceremony amounted to close on £100.

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