

ROME LETTER

(From our own correspondent.)

April 3.

THE PROCESSION OF PENANCE.

A great deal might be written of Holy Week in Rome, but no detail of these touching ceremonies strikes the foreigner more strongly than the great Procession of Penance, held on Good Friday in the Basilica of St. Croce in which the greater Relics of the Passion are kept. During Holy Week multitudes of the faithful crowd to St. Peter's, to St. John Lateran's, and St. Croce, standing for three hours or so waiting to catch a glimpse of parts of the True Cross. Then comes the Procession of Penance in St. Croce, held by the confraternity of the Holy Cross—the laymen of the Eternal City. This is the same edifice (though often restored), which Empress Helena erected to hold the True Cross, that this saintly woman brought from Palestine in her old age. Marching two by two, the men of the confraternity follow the bearer of the crucifix, all chanting the Italian hymn, 'Viva la Croce,' their president, one of the Roman princes, bringing up the rear with a large cross of black wood on his shoulder. They do not go outside the vestibule of the church; the Italian Government forbids this, but the procession can be seen by the multitude on the square, so that the stirring hymn is, at their appearance, taken up by the people.

POPE BENEDICT XV. TO THE AMERICAN HIERARCHY.

As was expected, the Holy Father has not allowed the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Catholic University of America to pass without joining in the joyful manifestations of America's 20,000,000 Catholics on such an auspicious occasion. The autograph letter, addressed by his Holiness to their Eminences the Cardinal Archbishops of Baltimore, New York, Boston, and the other prelates of the United States, shows what deep interest the Pontiff takes in the progress of the great centre of learning, which Bishop Shahan so ably directs. In an autograph letter to the Most Rev. John Ireland, his Holiness manifests the lively personal regard which he bears for this great prelate, and conveys his congratulations on the completion of St. Paul's new Cathedral.

THE SOLDIERS' GRATITUDE TO THE POPE.

There is another letter worthy of mention, this time to the Holy Father, from a number of the French soldiers who, disabled by their wounds, have been liberated by Germany, and who now write as follows to express their gratitude for the exchange at the Pope's instance:—The undersigned soldiers, lying in the hospital in Lyons, present to your Holiness the homage of their liveliest gratitude for their un hoped-for return to their fatherland after long months of imprisonment

abroad, a return obtained through the powerful and benevolent intervention of your Holiness. They beg of you to be so kind as to accord them your paternal blessing; also to their families, country, and benefactors, and they renew, Holy Father, the homage of their filial respect and devotion.'

AUSTRALIA'S WELCOME TO THE APOSTOLIC DELEGATE.

With feelings of extreme satisfaction the details of the welcome given by the ecclesiastical and civil authorities of Australia to his Excellency the Most Rev. Archbishop Cerretti, Apostolic Delegate, have been read in the Eternal City.

It is worthy of notice that the paternal lesson administered to a Roman daily paper last June by the Right Rev. Dr. Phelan, Bishop of Sale, has borne fruit. This paper was used in an attempt to fitch from the Irish emigrants the honor and merit of having built up the Church under the Southern Cross; but, I am glad to say, it instantly made reparation on receiving solid information on the point from this energetic Bishop. The paper in question, in its account of the welcome given to the Apostolic Delegate, takes care to bring into the limelight what it calls 'the merits of the Irish missionary spirit.'

ROME AT THE FOOT OF THE ALTAR OF REPOSE.

Before passing for the present from the subject of Holy Week in Rome, there is one other feature of its ceremonials which I ought to give in some detail. I refer to the old Roman custom of making a pilgrimage on Holy Thursday to a number of the basilicas and churches throughout the city to pray before the Altar of Repose. No sooner are the lengthy ceremonies of Holy Thursday morning brought to a termination than the Romans commence a round of a number of their favorite churches. In the early part of the day they enter in groups; but as the day advances and the people are able to leave their offices, a surging crowd keeps passing for hours through the more central edifices. In many cases the aid of the city guards have to be requisitioned to keep clear passages for ingress and egress. Some idea of this grand custom may be gathered from the calculation made by one of these officers last Thursday as to the numbers that visited the Altar of Repose in the church for English-speaking Catholics, St. Silvestro in Capite. When asked for a rough computation, he replied: 'From 70,000 to 100,000 people must have entered these portals yesterday.'

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