

will, I am sure, claim the attention of your Excellency.

1. The ministers of religion are not functionaries of the State.

2. Their emoluments are paid by way of indemnity, as compensation for confiscated ecclesiastical property.

Consequently the members of the clergy take no oath, nor do they assume any pledge towards the Belgian Government, but are simply subject, like all other citizens, to the general laws of the country.

I have stated, your Excellency, that ministers of religion, in Belgium, are not public functionaries.

Our Court of Cassation expressly recognised this in a judgment of the 4 March, 1847, which affirmed that it cannot be ignored that ministers of religion are neither depositaries nor agents of the civil authority; only those, says the judgment, can, in fact, be considered as such who by indirect or immediate delegation of the law or of the Government in some way exercise public power, and to this ministers of religion are extraneous.

I shall add that the emoluments are paid to the clergy by way of indemnity. In the terms of Art. 17 of the Belgian Constitution "the emoluments and pensions of ministers of religion are a charge upon the State; the sums necessary to meet them are annually included in the Budget of the State."

The preparatory negotiations of this Article prove that the great majority of the Congress, from which emanated the constitutional pact of Belgian independence, considered the emoluments and pensions of the clergy as compensation, in the form of an indemnity, for the ancient privileges of which the Catholic Church had been deprived at the time when ecclesiastical property was confiscated.

At the outset of our national independence, Mons. Prince de Méan, Archbishop of Malines, anxious to "guarantee to the Catholic religion that full and entire liberty which alone can ensure its peace and prosperity," wrote to the national Congress as follows: "The State did not take possession of the property of the clergy except with the obligation of providing becomingly for the expenses of worship and for the maintenance of its ministers. Article 1 of the French law of the 2 November, 1789 attests this."

The Holy See, for the sake of peace, ratified the alienation thereof solely on the express condition that the Government should remain obliged to treat the ministers of religion in a becoming manner, as Articles 13 and 14 of the Concordat of 1801, and also the Bulls thereto relating, afford proof. With a view to prevent unjust preferences and to prevent, by means of such action especially, any agent whatsoever from impeding the free exercise of worship by exercising an illegal influence upon the opinions and action of ecclesiastics—to prevent this, I say, the constituted Government has never required from the clergy the signing of any declaration in connection with the payment of their emoluments. If the Government now existing exact it, it will force the clergy into a position inferior to that guaranteed them by the Belgian Constitution.

I entertain an assured confidence that the Governor General will examine equitably the preceding considerations and recognise their legality.

Signed: D. CARD. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

The letter, with the standing and influence of Cardinal Mercier behind it, produced its intended effect; and the Governor General has abandoned his proposal.

The War and the Sacraments

The present war, carried out on such a colossal scale and involving the risk of sudden death to immense masses of men, has given rise to some new problems in regard to the administration of the Sacraments to soldiers; and Rome has been prompt to give authoritative decision in respect to the difficulties that have emerged. One of the most important of the recent declarations relates to the giving of absolution to soldiers

summoned to battle. A question was submitted to the Sacred Penitentiary in the following form: "Whether it is lawful, by a general formula or common absolution, without preceding confession, to absolve, before admitting them to Holy Communion, soldiers summoned to battle, when their number is so great that their confessions cannot be heard severally, after they have duly made an act of contrition?"

The Sacred Penitentiary, having maturely considered what has been explained, graciously decided, our Most Holy Father Benedict XV. assenting, that the answer should be given: "In the affirmative." And there is nothing to prevent those thus absolved in the aforesaid circumstances from being admitted to receive the Holy Eucharist. But let the military chaplains not omit, when opportunity is afforded, to instruct them that absolution so given will avail nothing unless they are duly disposed; and that, if they escape danger, there remains for them entire the obligation of going to confession in due course. All things whatsoever to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome in the S. Penitentiary, 6 February, 1915. CAROLUS PEROSI, S.P., Regens., JOSEPHUS BALICA, S.P., Secretarius.

A second important declaration, issued by the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments, relates to administration of Holy Communion and to the celebration of Mass in camps. It is in the following terms: "The Sacred Congregation of the Discipline of the Sacraments, desirous of consulting for the welfare of souls, in view of the extraordinary circumstance of the present war, and whilst they continue, by special authority of our Most Holy Lord Pope Benedict XV., declares and enacts the following: (1) That soldiers called to battle (soldiers at the front) can be admitted, *scrutis scrupulis*, to the Eucharistic Table by way of Viaticum. (2) That priests attached to the army who are intended to carry and care for the wounded and those who are ill (vernacularly litterbearers and infirmarians), if they cannot say Mass in churches, can celebrate Mass, all danger of irreverence being removed, in any fitting and safe place whatsoever, even in the open air; and that those who bear arms can celebrate Mass in the same way, and under the same conditions, but on Sundays only and on feasts of precept, provided all the aforesaid priests are hindered by no other canonical impediment. All things whatsoever to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome from the Secretariate of the Sacred Congregation, 11 February, 1915.

PHILIPPUS CARD. GIUSTINI,
Praefectus.
ALCISIUS CAPOSTASI, Ep. Thern.
Secretarius.

DIocese OF DUNEDIN

A Triduum in honor of the Blessed Sacrament began in St. Joseph's Cathedral on Friday evening, and was brought to a conclusion on Sunday at Vespers, when the 'Te Deum' was sung.

There was Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament at St. Joseph's Cathedral on Sunday from the last Mass until after Vespers, when the usual procession, followed by Benediction, took place.

A euchre party and social evening will be held in St. Mary's Hall, Mornington, on Friday night. The committee expect a large attendance, as the proceeds go towards paying off the debt on the church grounds.

The devotion of the Forty Hours' Adoration will begin in the Sacred Heart Church, North-East Valley, on Friday morning, when Solemn High Mass will be celebrated at 9 o'clock. The devotion will conclude on Sunday.

The Month's Mind of the late Rev. Father Keenan took place in St. Joseph's Cathedral on Tuesday morning at 9 o'clock. His Lordship Bishop Verdon presided at the Solemn High Mass, which was celebrated by the