

NEW CONVENT CHAPEL, WANGANUI

On Sunday last the new chapel erected by the Sisters of St. Joseph at their convent on St. John's Hill, Wanganui, was solemnly opened and blessed by his Grace, Archbishop Redwood. Visitors to Wanganui have admired the fine, up-to-date convent and boarding school which crowns the hill above the town. The addition of a new chapel, semi-detached from the main building, has now increased the architectural beauty of the head house of the Sisters of St. Joseph in New Zealand. The chapel is a monument to the zeal and piety of the nuns and also to the skill of the architect, Mr Swan. The interior is bright and devotional, and spacious enough to hold easily the entire community and the boarders. Exteriorly the view of the building from the avenue is imposing, though it strikes one that massiveness rather than gracefulness is its dominant note. The following is the text of the eloquent occasional discourse delivered by his Grace the Archbishop:—

I heartily congratulate the Sisters of St. Joseph on the blessing and solemn opening of their fine new chapel, which will be to them so great a comfort and strength in their arduous and saintly life. They have to save their own souls, and they are bound to constantly tend to the perfection of the Christian life by the faithful accomplishment of their religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In this chapel by the daily celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and the reception of Holy Communion, besides their private hours of prayer and devotion spent in its sacred precincts, what treasures of the choicest graces they and their pupils and novices will receive!

I avail myself of this occasion to address a few words of earnest exhortation to the Catholics of Wanganui upon the question of Catholic Education. It is regrettable that some Catholics take a rather narrow view of their concern in, and of their duties towards the Catholic education of childhood and youth. There are some who erroneously believe that the whole matter rests exclusively with the parents of the children who are to be educated, and that Catholics who have no such parental responsibilities need give themselves little anxiety with regard to schools and culture. The Catholic education of childhood and youth, however, is a matter in which all Catholics are deeply interested for the sake of the Catholic Church herself, from whose welfare they are not allowed to dissociate themselves. The Church of Christ is established by the Incarnate God to last until the end of ages in the pursuit of the salvation of souls. That Church is the spokesman of the truths brought by the Incarnate God to earth, the treasure house of the graces merited in favor of souls on the Cross of Calvary.

As Christ loves the Church which is His creation, as He loves souls for whose salvation He died, so He wishes the Church to grow and prosper, to widen out her tabernacles amid the peoples and nations. "Go," He said, "teach all nations, preach the Gospel to every creature." He could have made the growth and widening of the Church His own exclusive work, but, in the mysteriousness of love He calls for our co-operation and remits much to our doing. Whatever each one of us may do, or refuse to do, the Church must last and reign. Nevertheless, it is a fact in the divine dispensation that the more we do for the Church, the wider her Catholicity, the greater her prosperity. Here and there the Church withers and decays, because men do little for her; here and there she spreads out in ever-widening branches, blossoms and bears fruit, because men do their duty towards her. The question, then, before us is what we may do, what we should do, to aid the Church in her mission in New Zealand, this fair and favored land of so much promise, if its rising generation is properly educated.

Several are the ways by which we may co-operate with her and give her help. But, let me say it, the verdict of argument and experience is that the Church

is best served by works tending to preserve the faith of our children, by so fortifying their minds and hearts in its teachings and practices that, later on, no storm shall uproot it from the soul. In other words, the means of assuring to the Church in New Zealand a hopeful and brilliant future is the Catholic school and the Catholic college.

We move amid dangers to our faith. We, the adults, must daily and hourly battle with these dangers. The world around us is the slave of religious error: it is militant in defence of error. The atmosphere it compels us to breathe is charged with materialism, with indifference towards God. Difficult it is even for ourselves, whom years of loyalty have strengthened in the faith, to withstand the attack: heroic is the struggle in which we must engage. What, then, will it be with the children of to-day who will be the men and women of to-morrow, if they grow up without the salutary training which sweetly compels them to be valiant Catholics whatever the war waged against their faith? The men and women of the future will be what the boys and the girls of to-day are made to be. Theirs is the waxen age: impressions easily sit upon them and become their permanent inheritance. To make them the valiant Catholics of the future they must be fully drilled, fully prepared in infancy and youth.

Now, as things are in New Zealand, the school, practically, is the sole means by which childhood and youth are formed for their future duties and future battles. It is absolute futility to speak of parental care in homes, or of hurried hours in the so-called Sunday school. Not to homes, not to spare hours in the week, is the physical or commercial education of childhood entrusted. The school is the all in all: and the school, even more so, is the all in all in that most difficult of formation—religion and morals. Day by day the child must have the lessons of divine truth, hour by hour the child should breathe the atmosphere that will bring into its religious life-blood vitality and strength. Put in the school where wrong principles and wrong practices are taught, where wrong principles and wrong practices are intimated by word, by sign, by lowest whisperings: the child will not be the armed soldier to defend the truth. The mere silence in the schoolroom, during five or six hours in the week, on divine faith, soon stills and kills its vigor. Forbid the mention of God and of the Saviour in the schoolroom—in the thoughts of the child God and the Saviour become unimportant. Religious indifference, scepticism, positivism—all the forms of modern irreligion—are impressed indelibly upon the mind and the heart of the child.

Let us speak the patent fact. As the effect of the exclusion of religion from the schools of New Zealand, New Zealand, with all its material progress, is on the high and broad road to what at best is cultured paganism. God and Christ are being locked out, crushed out of the lives of its citizens, because God and Christ are being blocked out, crushed out from the schoolrooms into which are thrust the childhood and the youth of the land. No greater disaster could befall it.

Therefore, if you wish that your men and your women of the future be valiant Catholics, put your children into Catholic schools, such as they are in Wanganui, and elsewhere in the Dominion, taught by devoted teachers trained to teach religion by instruction and example—teachers whose prayers, whose teaching, whose lives are the pride and strength of the Church in this country and throughout Australia, the United States of America, and every other place halloed by their presence and devotion. Help to maintain and develop such schools. The Church knows well her needs: she shirks no effort, no sacrifice to bring to all her little ones a thoroughly Catholic education. Catholic parents, send your children to the Catholic schools. Catholics *all*, take the deepest interest in the work of Catholic education, whether or not your children are its immediate beneficiaries. It is the Church that makes the appeal for her own sake, for her own life, for her own welfare. Let us care for the Cath-

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