

The Catholic who does not comply with the conditions of the *Ne Temere* Decree can contract a marriage valid in the eyes of the State. If he is satisfied with that, there is no more to be said. But it is the duty of the Catholic priest to remind such a man that, though he has satisfied the law of the State, he has not received the Sacrament of marriage and that, before God and the Church, he will not be married until the laws of the Church are complied with and the marriage consent renewed in the manner prescribed by the Church. That duty every Catholic priest will perform with all the tact and delicacy that the circumstances suggest. He will give no needless offence to anybody. But he will obey God rather than man.

Whether the civil authorities wish to register the marriage consent renewed before a priest by persons whose civil marriage has been already registered, is a matter on which I have no information and with which, indeed, I have little concern. No sufficient reason occurs to me why the civil authorities should not rest content with the registration already effected. But it is for them to say whether there should be a second registration and, if there should be, then, what form it should take.

The root offence in this whole matter, of course, is that the Catholic Church claims to be founded by Christ and be divinely invested with teaching and legislative power within her own sphere. Unlike most of her assailants, she holds that marriage is one of the Sacraments instituted by Christ and, therefore, that it is one of the things to which her power extends. While recognising the authority of the State over the marriage contract, as a civil contract, she is not prepared to relinquish her own authority, nor is she too timid to use it. That claim, no doubt, will be regarded groundless and arrogant by many outside the Church. They make no such claim for their own religious body; or if they do, they recognise that it would be futile to attempt to use it. They talk of their Church, of the Bible, of their synods and assemblies. But, when Parliament has spoken, every cause for them is ended. They may have had their own views antecedently about divorce, for example, or the marriage of a man with his deceased's wife sister. But, once a Parliamentary majority—it may be of agnostics or infidels—has spoken all the oracles are silent and a divorced man, or a man wishing to wed his deceased wife's sister, will not lack a Protestant blessing upon his new union. If absolute Prohibition were carried here to-morrow, you would have some people casting about for a substitute of the wine which Christ prescribed, but the law of Victoria forbade, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Catholic Church does not sit fearful and expectant on the doorstep of Parliament. She gives to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; to God the things that are God's. She does not take her teaching or her disciplinary laws from Parliaments, or Privy Councils, or Kings, or Emperors. Still less will she alter her teaching or practice, at the bidding of those who, themselves having no authority, no effective authority, at all events, would like to bring the Catholic Church down to their own level. There is no need to accuse her assailants of bad faith. Many, I am sure, are quite sincere. Their attitude is intelligible, but it is none the less regrettable.

Attitude of the Ministry: "No Legal Status."

A reply by the Premier to a deputation from the Protestant Federation regarding the *Ne Temere* Decree sets out the attitude of the Ministry toward the subject. In the course of his reply, Mr. Lawson said: "The Crown Law officers have made exhaustive inquiries into the matter of the *Ne Temere* Decree, and have viewed the question from all standpoints. The result of these inquiries, shortly put, is that there is no infringement of State laws. In any special instances in which such an infringement may be committed, the onus of applying for any civil remedy must lie with the persons interested. The Government would have no legal status in the matter. The question of amending the law to deal with that subject is a very delicate and

difficult one. In modern times it has been an accepted principle, in English-speaking countries at least, that the Legislature will not concern itself with matters of religious belief. Any interference by Parliament with religious matters would be resisted, even by persons who have no sympathy with those who believe in the principles of the *Ne Temere* Decree. It is not intended to introduce legislation dealing with this question."

Diocesan News

ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON

(From our own correspondent.)

June 14.

The sum of £250; being a bequest from the late Mr. J. P. Bourke, of Kilbirnie, towards the Wellington Catholic Education Board Fund has been received by the Board from the trustees of the estate.

The second of a series of socials, promoted by the residents of the Catholic Hostel, was held in the Alexandra Hall on June 7. The function was a complete success, the hall being crowded. Cowley's orchestra provided the music, and an excellent supper was dispensed by a committee of girls, under the matron. The next social will be held on July 17.

Great activity is being displayed by the parishioners of Thorndon and St. Joseph's, in the preliminary arrangements for the combined monster bazaar, which is to be held in the Town Hall, in October. St. Joseph's will devote its portion of the proceeds towards paying off the new girls' school now being erected in Buckle Street, and Thorndon will utilize its share for the general purposes of the parish.

A very pleasant little function took place at the monthly meeting of the board of management of the Catholic Women's Hostel, Wellington, on Tuesday last, when the chairman (Major Halpin), on behalf of the members of the board, presented Miss Wheeler, who lately resigned the office of secretary (a position she has held since the inauguration of the hostel in 1915) with a handbag containing a purse of sovereigns. Major Halpin spoke of the great loss sustained by the board in the resignation of Miss Wheeler, the greater in that ill-health was the reason. He wished her a speedy return to good health. Mr. W. F. Johnson, secretary of the Diocesan Council, expressed the appreciation of his council of the work done by Miss Wheeler. Miss Wheeler thanked members for the pleasant things that had been said, and hoped to be able to take an active part in the work of the board at some future time.

The Wellington Catholic Education Board met on last Wednesday evening at the Catholic Federation rooms. His Grace Archbishop O'Shea presided, and Father S. Mahony, S.M., was amongst those present. Accounts totalling £160 were passed for payment. Arrangements were made for the annual meeting, which will take place early in August. His Grace Archbishop O'Shea congratulated the members on the success of their efforts in the past. The formation of the board would prove to be one of the most successful undertakings in the archdiocese, and would place the work of Catholic education in the city on a sound financial basis. He was very pleased at the progress of Catholic schools in the archdiocese, and, provided they could obtain the necessary teachers, he laid it down as a principle, that wherever there was a parish, or district of a parish where there were 50 Catholic children of a school age, a school must be provided. Consideration of the report of the finance sub-committee was deferred for a special meeting of the board.