

# Palmerston's New Church

SOLEMN BLESSING AND OPENING.

Sunday, November 29, was a gala day in the parish of Palmerston. The beautiful new church, erected by the pastor, Father Kavanagh and his generous flock, has for some time been complete and only awaited the official opening to become henceforth the spiritual centre of all the Catholic homes of the district.

During the preceding week the weather conditions were anything but promising, but the saints were praying for Palmerston, and Sunday morning dawned bright and cloudless, with the sun smiling a benediction on the white walls of the beautiful little temple which now stands above the town.

Many visitors journeyed from Dunedin for the ceremony, and all were delighted by the success of the function and by the appearance of the church, which is a little gem, and a credit to priest and people, and to the architect and the builder.

At eleven o'clock Pontifical High Mass was celebrated by his Lordship Dr. Whyte. On the altar were: Deacon, Rev. Dr. O'Neill; subdeacon, Rev. Mr. Gavin; assistant priest, Rev. W. Monaghan; M.C., Rev. A. Feneley; deacons at the Throne, Revs. Messrs. Evans and Rehan.

The occasional sermon was preached by Rev. C. Collins, M.A., Mosgiel College.

Taking for his text: "My house is a house of Prayer" (Matt. 21-13), Father Collins said: The opening and blessing of a new church is for the people of this parish an occasion of great solemnity. Over fifty years ago the old Church of St. Michael's here in Palmerston was solemnly blessed and opened. For all those years that church has provided for the spiritual wants of this district. And for many of you listening to me to-day the sight of the old building calls up distant and beloved memories. There you were baptised, there you made your first confession and Holy Communion, and received Confirmation. Later on, before the old altar, you were joined in the bonds of Matrimony, and in your turn brought along your own children to the fountains of Baptism. Sad memories there are too, for when the angel of death came to claim your loved ones, it was from that church you followed them to their last resting place. As the years rolled on from the time of the evening, old faces disappeared and new ones took their places, until to-day we have another, a younger generation.

Now, if the Catholic Church possesses one striking characteristic outside her four great marks, it is that of Progress. She herself began with but a handful of men—twelve apostles and a few disciples. These first missionaries hearkened to the command of their Divine Master to go forth and teach all nations. Their efforts were crowned with such glorious success that to-day her dominion is world-wide. From the small seed she has grown into the large, outspreading tree, in whose branches the birds of the air, that is the nations of the earth, find shelter. Nowhere do we see this characteristic of progress more striking than in her buildings. Her first conventicles

were rooms, such as the supper-room in Jerusalem, provided in the houses of the first Christians. Then came the times of persecution, when her churches were the hidden catacombs, hollowed out from below the earth's surface. Peace came at last, and with it began to appear more pretentious buildings; each generation erecting more costly and more magnificent churches to the glory of God. So, here too, in your own little parish progress has been going on. The old church had fulfilled its work, and priest and people, recognising that a more commodious and imposing temple was fitting to the district and to the glory of God, have erected this beautiful structure in which we are gathered together to-day.

Since the creation of man, his heart has ever yearned for union with his Creator. His one strenuous effort since the time of Adam has been to bridge over the distance between the material and the spiritual—between the human and the divine. This has been the end of all religion—to worship, to love, to serve—to bring God within the grasp of human faculty and to stimulate human faculty to action. With this effort of man God has ever been in sympathy. To help us do this, God has wrought the Incarnation, and Jesus Christ is the great revelation of God and the great force that draws us to Him. To effect this purpose then—to keep fast and close to the Creator through Our Lord Jesus Christ, man, among his other works, builds churches; and for this reason, that a Catholic church is the scene of the presence of Christ. When Our Lord was on earth, it is true, He asked for neither roof nor walls. But since He has gone to His heavenly Kingdom, circumstances have changed. The Holy Gospels, the Seven Sacraments, especially the Eucharistic Sacrament and Sacrifice—these can be administered fittingly only in a church. If need be, we know, they can be administered in any place. But the Catholic Church wishes to carry out her mission to her members in the light of publicity; and so, to proclaim her powers, to feed her people, to draw them closer to their God, she builds her churches.

Now among all the means by which frail man endeavors to reach his Creator there is none more efficacious than that of prayer. And this is the reason why a Catholic church should be above all else, what Our Divine Lord called it, "a house of prayer." No matter what a building may contain within its four walls, or what it may do for those congregated there—unless it helps to lift their hearts to God, it cannot be truly called a church. And we Catholics know that in no spot on earth is true spiritual prayer made more easily and more habitually than in a church where the whole Christian faith is fully believed and practised.

We sometimes think of prayer as simply supplication—asking Almighty God to grant us something either spiritual or temporal. But prayer means more than this; it covers adoration, love, praise, thanksgiving, and sorrow for sin—for in all these man lifts his

heart to heaven. In this sense it is not difficult to understand how great, how august, how Divine a thing is Christian prayer. To this, the noblest exercise of the human soul we assign a house, a home, when we dedicate a new church; for here shall all those acts of love, of adoration, of praise, of thanksgiving, of repentance be offered up to the Most High. Here too there will be prayer in common, a public recognition of the Living God, when "each shows his faith to every other, and each calls upon each to show his faith in turn." And this mutual example, this union in prayer, will tend to increase and augment the faith and devotion of one another.

Now this would be true if our churches were no more than halls in which we met for common prayer, for, as Our Lord says: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them." But our churches are more than this. In the first place it is there that the word of God is dispensed to us; that His infallible teaching is given us. From the lips of God's minister we hear explained those divine truths and dogmas that constitute the faith of Christianity. Secondly, it is in our churches that Christ Himself, through the ministry of His priests, releases His grace through those seven divine channels that make up the great sacramental system. Consider for a few moments, how closely will this new church be bound up with your lives and the lives of your children. Your newly born infant, whose soul as yet bears the strain of original sin, its heritage from our first parents, will be carried to these sacred precincts. Here the purifying waters of baptism, applied in the name of the Holy Trinity, will wash away that stain; that infant soul will be clothed in the shining white garment of sanctifying grace, and the little one will be sent out into the world with the injunction to hear that garment unstained before the judgment seat of Our Lord Jesus Christ that he may have life everlasting. As the years go on, if those little feet happen to stray from the paths that God has marked out for them, they are once more set right in the tribunal of penance, where the merits of Christ's Precious Blood are again applied to the soul and all sins are wiped away by the words of absolution. More even than this is necessary, for that child's soul, just as its body, stands in need of nourishment to sustain it on its journey through life. Then it is that the great spiritual food is given which is nothing less than the Body and Blood of Christ administered in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. On no day, perhaps, will your parents' heart rejoice more than when you see your little child, in all its innocence, approach these altar rails to receive his Lord for the first time on the day of his first Holy Communion. A day will come also when that same child will kneel in this sanctuary at the feet of the Bishop to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation; when, through the imposition of hands, the Holy Ghost will come down upon him to make him a soldier of Christ. In the natural course of events, excepting the chosen few who may be called to a higher life in religion or the priesthood, it will be before

R. H. Todd

LADIES' and GENTS' TAILOR



145 RATTRAY STREET  
Telephone 2448.

Dunedin