

The Family Circle

MATER IMMACOLATA!

(Feast—December 8.)

Hail, Lily of Virginity!
Mother undefiled!
Unfading Flower of Purity!
Queen of Mercy, mild!
Hail, ever-glorious Morning Star,
That dost the sun outshine!
Plead for thy children here to-day
Who gather round thy shrine.—

Thou'rt purer than the lily fair,
More fragrant than the rose;
Thy throne in heaven's highest court
With radiant glory glows;
Angelic choirs glad praises sing
Of thy pure virgin state
To thee, our Mother and our Queen,
Conceived Immaculate!

Hail, Temple of the Living God,
From spot and stain e'er free!
Plead for thy children here on earth
That we may holier be.
In every weary woe and care
We thy protection need—
O Spotless Maid! O lily fair!
For us, then, intercede.

Plead thou our cause with thy dear Son,
And send us sweet relief.
Grant Erin's faith may brighter shine,
Though bitter be her grief.
O Virgin blest! O Fount of Love!
Hear thou our pleading prayer;
On us thine eyes of pity turn,
And take us 'neath thy care.

—EDIE HAYES.

Rathmines.

WHERE A SAINT STAYED: HOTEL'S MEMORIAL PLAQUE.

One of the most touching incidents in the life of the Little Flower, and one which has frequently been referred to during the ceremonies of her canonisation, was her pilgrimage to Rome, with her father, and her personal plea to Pope Leo XIII to be allowed to enter the Carmel at the age of fifteen.

Investigations made in connection with this trip to Rome of the future saint have revealed that she stopped at a "Hotel du Sud" in the via Capo le Case. A plate bearing an appropriate inscription has been placed on the site of the room which she occupied.

SIGNS OF A TRUE VOCATION.

Signs of a true vocation are many: a few shall be numbered here, which may prove helpful to the undecided.

1. A desire to have a religious vocation, together with a conviction that God is calling you.
2. A love for prayer and holy things in general.
3. To be zealous for the salvation of the souls of others as well as of one's own soul.
4. A desire to give one's self entirely and abandon all for the love of Jesus Christ.
5. A contempt of the world, together with a hatred of sin, and a desire to atone for sin.

Father Meschler, S.J., tells us the advantages of the religious life when he writes thus: It is like an island of peace and calm in the middle of the fleeting, changing, restless flood of this earthly life. It is like a garden planted by God and blessed with the fat of the land and the dew of heavenly consolation. It is like a lofty mountain, whence the last echoes of this world are heard. What peace, what happiness, purity, and holiness has it shed over the face of the earth.—Exchange.



A HARBOR LIGHT.

It would be hard to imagine a Catholic home without a crucifix in it, a Catholic home where devotion to our Crucified Saviour is not practiced. Sacred pictures there should be in our homes, and other articles of devotion; but first and above all, a Crucifix.

"Why do you Catholics always have that image before you?" a good Protestant once asked. "I always like to think of Jesus in His Resurrection!"

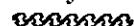
Ah, but the Calvaries we must all mount wearily and painfully before we reach the glory of our resurrection! And it is while as we mount our calvaries, it is while we suffer and toil, that we have need of the crucifix. What a fountain of strength and consolation it is, this image of the loving Saviour suffering all, enduring all, teaching how to suffer and endure.

It is succor in pain. It is balm and oil to wounded hearts; to souls made barren, grief brings "the gift of tears, sweet as the gift of song." It waters their arid wastes and makes the flowers of patience and resignation bloom where only a bitterness spread like a blight before. To the heart emptied of tears it brings the pure, refreshing dew of new hopes and new ideals.

And then, in the hour of temptation, in the moment of sin, oh! what magic has been wrought by the sight, the touch, of the crucifix!

Like a sudden light in the darkness, like a harbor light when the night is full of "cries of wreck upon the roaring deep," it bursts like a beacon before the harassed soul, and with its cry of mercy, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" it reaches out, it saves, it shields, and shelters and enfolds.

A world of books could be written about the crucifix, yet all would not be said. Have you a crucifix? Do you use it, or is it thrust away in some corner and forgotten? Bring it out again. Give it one thoughtful glance. Study it. Think what it means, what it says. You will not hide it away again. And if you have no crucifix in your home, get one. You need it. It will be to you as arms, armor, security.



GOODNESS.

Goodness and learning cannot of themselves enable anybody to find the true religion. Goodness cannot, because nobody is good enough; we are all sinners, and therefore by nature more or less blind to God and the spiritual world. Nor can learning, because human learning is wholly concerned

with the things of this world, and cannot get beyond it: it can therefore no more lead people to the knowledge of God than the science of chemistry can lead them to the knowledge of history. The Catholic Faith was never intended for learned people more than others: the Gospel was first preached to the poor and ignorant, and as St. Paul says, "the world by wisdom knew not God." It was not intended, either, exclusively for the good, but for "men of good will"—i.e., for men who want to be good, though they may not be so yet. Many who have no religion at all, people say are good, in the worldly sense, who have no religion at all, and say they don't want any. That kind of goodness, which consists in a general adherence to established moral principles, is one of the fruits of religion; but since it can certainly be had without religion itself, it clearly cannot prove anything as to the religion of anyone who has it. A person cannot be truly religious without at least trying to be good; but he may try to be good and succeed very fairly without the true religion. What religious belief really depends on is character—not so much what a person does or knows as what he is: and our characters depend mainly upon ourselves. They are built up, generally by our conduct during a course of years, but may sometimes undergo, from various causes, a sudden and complete change. The grace of faith, which God gives probably to everybody, and with which those who believe co-operate, is thus a test, not of our learning or conduct, but of the motives on which we habitually act, since these are the main constituents of character. A man who loves goodness for itself, and desires to know God, is predisposed to faith. One who tries to be good because goodness is a way to worldly success, and never thinks of God, is not so predisposed; though his character may—as apparently was the case with some of whom we read in the New Testament—be changed by God's appeal to his soul. We must therefore decide on our religion for ourselves; the only thing that will help us in uncertainty is prayer.—The Missionary.



A MOTHER'S WISH.

Baby, oh baby, why can't you stay little?
Here in my arms you lie snugly and warm,
Safe from the world in your own little haven,
While I protect you and guard you from harm.

See, does a sunbeam stray over your eyelids,
Teasing you gaily with warm, dazzling ray?

Never mind, little one, it shan't molest you—
Mother's own hands, baby, brush it away.

Shield you from sunshine? Ah, would I
could shield you,

Guard you from all of life's thunder-storms too;

Tempests and trials to which I must yield you,

Out in the world that is waiting for you.

Ah, let me stay that far day of committal,
Stay it with laughter and tears and a kiss—

Baby, oh, baby, why can't you be little,
Safe in my arms, baby, always—like this?

—BEATRICE ASHTON.

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