

Current Topics

"Father"

Next to the time-honored and well-merited title of *superior*, no other title ought to be as dear to the priest as the word "Father." We read that in poor old dying England certain bright spirits have objected to calling a priest "father" on the ground that it is of Irish origin. While noting that English Catholics might object to their faith with good reason on the same ground it is pleasing to find that a sane-minded Briton staunchly defends and thoroughly appreciates the familiar title. Bishop Vaughan writes concerning the discussion:

"The pastor, he says, is *ex officio*, the true father of his flock. He lives in their midst. He baptises them, and so they become his spiritual children; he teaches and instructs them; he feeds them with the supersubstantial Bread, which comes down from heaven. And, when their souls are sick and suffering from sin and spiritual ailments, he it is who attends to them, and heals them, in the sacrament of Penance. Further, he unites them in holy Matrimony; and he stands at their bedside, when they are dying, and prepares them for their last long journey. In short, like a loving parent he is at their beck and call both night and day. In a word, the secular priest is—to a greater extent than any religious—their spiritual Father, and they are more truly his children than anyone else. So let them glory in the title of 'Father.' The old Cardinal [Manning] used also to say that it is a great help to the priest himself to hear himself addressed as 'Father.' It reminds him of his duty to his flock. It helps him to realise the obligations he is under of watching over them, and of counselling and advising them, and attending to all their wants."

Catholic Doctrine in High Schools

A couple of years ago a thoughtful and learned superior of a convent remarked to us what a great pity it is that in every Catholic secondary school there is not a regular, efficient, up-to-date course of lectures on Christian belief for the pupils. It is more than a pity: it is almost a sin. When one thinks of the boys and girls who go out into the world without a scientific knowledge of religion one ceases to wonder that so many of them either lose their faith or else lose their morals. One ceases to be astonished that of so many of them it may well be said by the public: *Optimi pessima corruptio*—The best when corrupted becomes the worst. And it is precisely from such boys and girls that the greatest harm for our secondary schools, nay, for the Church itself, comes. People point the finger at them and ask sneeringly: Are these the product of Catholic secondary schools? And, apart from the number of those who go down in the fight, what of the rest, of those who cannot give a reasoned and intelligent explanation of the faith for which their fathers died; who cannot answer the easiest objection levelled at the Church; who can only blush and be dumb when some scoffer repeats the lies he has learned from the works of Joseph McCabe and his peers? Are they a credit to us? They certainly are not, but it is not their fault. If secondary schools profess to give a secular education higher than that of the primary, we think it a scandal if they neglect to give a religious education higher than that which suffices for children in primary schools. We go so far as to say that a secondary Catholic school that does not try to give children a right solid grounding in religion is unworthy to exist. It may be a hard saying; it may cause some of our friends to denounce us, as so many other remarks we made did in the past. But it is God's truth. Go through a secondary school to-morrow and find out how many pupils who know French and who have passed high examinations in singing and music can tell you how to answer the commonest objections concerning the Bible, the Popes, the

Church, the existence of God. And yet, we have the word of Jesus Christ to assure us that this is precisely the knowledge that must be sought first by His followers if they would save their souls. *This is eternal life, that they know Thee the only true God and Thy Son Whom Thou hast sent, Jesus Christ.* We may pride ourselves on our secular learning, but in the end the only learning that matters is that of Christ. We are Christians in name but in deed we are only poor ones if we neglect to learn the knowledge of our religion. And who can deny that the best test of the efficiency of a Catholic school is the standard of religious knowledge among its pupils? What do they know about Christ, about the Church, about the Mysteries of Faith, about the theology of the Sacraments? The answer that must be given to these questions will reveal whether a Catholic High School is worth its place or not. In theory all will agree with this. It is a matter of common sense to admit it: nobody who has the slightest conception of what the Faith means could deny it. But how do theory and practice work together? If you want to find out go through a class some day and ask the children a few questions like the following: How was there day and night before the sun was created? How do you reconcile the statement that all mankind except those in the Ark were drowned by the Flood with certain indications that this was not the case? Why does a good God allow so much pain and misery in the world? How can you reconcile the Pope's infallibility with the case of Honorius, of Galileo? Does not the doctrine of Evolution dispose of the immortality and spirituality of the human soul? If there were bad Popes how could the Church be Holy? What is to be said about the conflict between science and Faith? Many such questions will arise when pupils go out into the world, and if they cannot answer them now what hope have they later on? Nevertheless, it is the solemn duty of every Catholic High School to see that they go forth prepared to answer them—a solemn duty, is, we think, the right word for it.

The Gaelic Tongue

Some time ago a certain fidget who serves the Empire by forging passages from Lecky and by making attacks on Irish Catholics that must surely be penned or dictated in the saner intervals of chronic madness told the public that there were only a few thousand people in the world who knew Gaelic at the present time. As another example of the sort of falsehood served up for public consumption by the fidget and similar assistants in the propaganda work of our New Zealand day-lies we here publish the statistics given by a recent Irish census:

THE IRISH LANGUAGE. IMMENSE STRIDES BEING MADE IN THE SCHOOLS.

The striking fact that out of 139,990 children in Ireland, 92,819 are learning the national speech emerges from a census made by the general secretary of the Gaelic League.

To each of the 1,117 parishes in Ireland a form was sent out—to every parish priest or manager, who was asked to answer questions. Although Mr. O Murthuile is not quite satisfied with the result of the inquiry, he was surprised that the census was so complete, having regard to the state of the country during the year. He then gives a table according to the diocese, as follows:—

	Children attending school.	Children learning Irish.
Kerry	15,710	15,153
Dublin	12,673	9,657
Limerick	8,863	8,175
Elphin	7,887	6,781
Waterford and Lismore ...	8,220	5,815
Killaloe	6,295	4,677
Tuam	5,634	4,191
Galway	5,668	4,677
Cloyne	4,937	4,059
Ossory	4,880	3,660

Other diocesan percentages are lower than these.