

Catholic World

POLISH NATIONAL SHRINE.

The restoration of Polish independence is to be commemorated by the erection of a great national Catholic shrine at the capital, according to a vote taken by the Diet. Work on the shrine which is to be called the Church of Divine Providence, will begin at once. It is even possible that the church will be erected on the foundations of one similarly planned by the Diet of 1791, following the ratification of the first Polish Constitution.

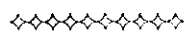


LEGAL TRIBUTE TO POPE.

Speaking at Cincinnati before the convention of the American Bar Association, Mr. James M. Beck, solicitor-general of the United States, paid a tribute to Pope Benedict, as a great international moral power. Mr. Beck's speech was on "The Spirit of Lawlessness." After referring to the era of disrespect for law, he said: "Lest I be accused of undue pessimism, let me cite as a witness one who, of all men, is probably best equipped to express an opinion upon the moral state of the world. I refer to the venerable head of that religious organisation which, with its trained representatives in every part of the world, is probably better informed as to its spiritual state than any other organisation."

"Speaking last Christmas Eve, in an address to the College of Cardinals, the venerable Pontiff gave expression to an estimate of present conditions which should have attracted far greater attention than it apparently did."

"The Pope said that five plagues were now afflicting humanity. The first was the unprecedented challenge to authority. The second, an equally unprecedented hatred between man and man. The third was the abnormal aversion to work. The fourth, the excessive thirst for pleasure as the great aim of life. And the fifth, a gross materialism which denied the reality of the spiritual in human life. The accuracy of this indictment will commend itself to men who, like myself, are not of Pope Benedict's communion."



EARLY CATHOLIC MISSIONS IN AFRICA.

The monthly periodical, *Missions de Scheut*, issued by the Belgian Missionary Congregation of Scheut-les-Bruxelles, has always interesting reports from the missions of the Congo, the Philippines, and the far interior of China, the North-West Provinces and Mongolia, where these Belgian missionaries are doing wonderful pioneer work. The reports from the Congo missions in the September issue tell of steady progress, but also of the terrible loss of life in some districts due to the spread of "sleeping sickness." Before going to Africa the missionaries follow in Belgium a course of tropical medicine and hygiene, and the dispensaries and hospitals at the mission stations are doing good work in combating the pestilence in the districts it has invaded. One of the missionaries tells of an interesting discovery made when paying a first visit to a tribe, which probably had never before seen a white man. In four of the villages he found posts erected, supporting a little canopied shrine of wood, an open niche, in which stood a small weather-worn statue of Our Blessed Lady. The villagers are all pagans. Their hunters before going out in to the forests have the habit of paying offerings before the shrine and expect that this will bring them good luck in their hunting. He was told by the people that they had come, long years ago, from another country, the Portuguese province of Loanda. The statues are of European origin, and he suggests that perhaps when they were in the Portuguese colony the people were Christians, but lost all knowledge of their former religion when they drifted away into the Congo forests. The once flourishing missions of Portuguese Africa were all but destroyed in the latter half of the eighteenth century when the Society of Jesus was suppressed, and a few years later the persecution of the religious Orders in Portugal and the wars of the French Revolution cut off the supply of missionaries from Europe.

CATHOLIC ASCENDANCY IN HOLLAND.

The second chamber of the Dutch Parliament, which corresponds to our House of Representatives, is divided equally between the Right and the Left parties (writes V.S., in the *Fortnightly Review*, N.Y.). The latter, made up mostly of radical Socialists, a sprinkling of Communists, and the sorry remnants of the once all-powerful Liberals, were unable to agree on a Cabinet, and hence the reins had to be taken up by the Right wing, which consists of Catholics, anti-Revolutionaries, and "orthodox Protestants."

The general election of 1918, held for the first time on the principle of proportional representation, resulted in a gain of five members for the Catholics. They are now 30 in number, and being numerically the strongest faction, were asked to form a Cabinet. Of the nine members of the latter, five are practical Catholics. The Premier, Jonkheer Rhuys, in a public address, emphatically expressed his thanks to the Almighty for having mercifully kept the country out of war, and gave no small credit for this favor to the fervent prayers of the Catholic population, especially the little children.

The members of the present Cabinet are able and skillful leaders and statesmen of high purpose, who are putting Holland in the front rank of European countries. They have established the eight-hour day, increased the premiums paid under the old-age pension law, made provisions for the unemployed, etc. The Socialists, quite naturally, do not like to see their thunder stolen and are bitter against the Catholics. What enrages them more than anything else, perhaps, is their inability to capture the Catholic laboring men. The latter, for years past, have been carefully organised in exclusively Catholic unions, and thus, in the main, safeguarded against radicalism.

Despite their endless troubles during the war the Dutch have carefully worked out a new constitution, under which the Catholics, after an uninterrupted struggle lasting over half a century, have secured justice for themselves in the matter of education. Their schools henceforth will be on an equal basis with the public schools.

There is now pending before the Second Chamber an anti-sedition Bill for the purpose of curbing revolutionary speech and punishing acts of rebellion against the established order. The Radicals and the Communists, led by Jews of the Hungarian and Russian type, are infuriated at what they style "political strangulation." They have resorted to all kinds of unparliamentary obstruction, but the Government is standing firm and the Bill is certain of being enacted. Holland's rulers for some time have in various ways been strengthening themselves against radical propaganda, which mostly emanates from abroad. "Civil Guards" have been organised in all parts of the country. They are being drilled regularly in military tactics and the use of firearms, and hold themselves in readiness to squelch any overt act of rebellion. Catholics are prominent in this organisation, and in some places make up as high as 80 per cent. of the membership. Thus, by a strange irony of history, those who till half a century ago were looked upon and treated as social and political outcasts, are now counted as the strongest props of law and order and the most resolute defenders of constituted authority.

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