

any existing, notably mosques." From the same source we learn that the concessionaries also promise to "form a Turkish working class and imbue the population with a taste for sports and physical exercise." Moreover, they will "establish in the most humble villages the healthy homes necessary for the amelioration of the race and character."

Some Important Decisions

To a large section of our readers the following information will be valuable and interesting. In the Irish Ecclesiastical Record for April, the liturgical editor deals with two points of special interest to convents. He is asked for a reply to these questions:

(1) Is not a convent oratory semi-public according to Can. 1188, §2? Could a nun, for the peace of her conscience, make her confession there to a priest approved by the Ordinary, but who has not got the extraordinary faculties mentioned in Can. 876?

(2) When carrying the Blessed Sacrament in procession to the sick, if nuns with lighted torches accompany a priest, should they walk behind him?

Replies: 1. (a) Yes, it would seem to be quite clear from Can. 1188, §2, of the New Code. (b) Yes, in accordance with Can. 522, provided he is a confessor *ab Ordinario loci pro mulieribus approbatus*, the confession may validly and licitly take place in any church, or oratory, even semi-public.

(2) Before replying we deem it advisable to give a brief description of the whole ceremony in accordance, as far as possible, with the prescriptions of the Roman Ritual. We say advisedly "as far as possible," for ordinarily the circumstances do not permit the carrying out of the full Ritual ceremony regulating the liturgical procession of the Blessed Sacrament from the altar to the sick room. The Ritual prescribes for this procession the use of the *umbrella* and the assistance of clerics or acolytes and torch-bearers, who are to precede the priest, but a decree of the Sacred Congregation, dated December 11, 1903, distinctly says that the custom of women taking part in the strictly liturgical sense in this procession cannot be tolerated. Now in this matter nuns are exactly in the same position as other women, so that they are not allowed to hold the *umbrella* over the priest's head, nor to ring the bell, nor to carry processional torches before the Blessed Sacrament. In the absence of boys to perform these duties, the bell may be rung by a nun to give warning of the approach of the Blessed Sacrament and, if necessary, she may precede the priest to point out the way, but she must not be a participant in the procession in the strict sense; similarly, one or more nuns may, if necessary, go before the priest to light the way, but if there is no such necessity the proper place for all is after the priest.

Preparation: For this ceremony there ought to be ready the following:—*In the Sacristy:* a surplice, stole (white), humeral veil (white), and burse (white) containing a corporal; *On the lowest Altar step,* a *Benedictionale*, or chart containing Prayer of the Blessed Sacrament; *Outside the Sanctuary:* nuns with lighted torches and bell; *In the sick room:* a chair or bench on which to leave the humeral veil, a white linen Communion cloth *ante pectus infirmi*, a table covered with a white cloth, on which are placed a corporal unfolded, two lighted candles, a vessel with holy water and an aspersion, a finger bowl containing water, and a Ritual properly marked.

In convents or hospitals Holy Communion may be given before or after or during Mass in the ordinary way provided that the altar is visible from the sick bed, or, even though the altar is not visible, provided that the voice of the celebrant is audible to the sick person. It is not permitted however to interrupt the Mass for the sake of bringing Holy Communion to the sick, either for the sake of devotion or as the Viaticum in cases where neither one or other of these conditions is fulfilled.

If Holy Communion is given to several in the same room or dormitory, the one Blessing with the ciborium is given at the end to all; if the sick are in separate rooms the full ceremony is repeated in each room.

The Sistine Choir

It is the proud boast of the great Roman choir that its origin dates back as far as the fourth century. When Monsignor Casimiri was conducting part of the choir in England some time ago, this claim was received with little notice by a press that could not be expected to appreciate all that it meant. The average English journalist is not a man of deep research, and it were too much to expect that he should be acquainted with the history of Church music. There is a time-honored tradition that Pope Sylvester established a Singing School at Rome during his reign, which extended from 314 to 325, A.D. Another venerable tradition says that Pope Gregory the Great founded a school about the year 600 A.D. Of the Pontifical Choir founded by Gregory the Great there is no doubt that the present Choir is the lineal descendant. Gregory was not the founder of Singing Schools, but he laid the axe of reform to the root of a system which was not edifying, and in its place he created another which has continued to this day. Hence there is no discrepancy between the two apparently contradictory traditions. If the Roman Choir wants to claim an origin farther back than 1400 years ago, it is justified in doing so by the existence of a Singing School attached to every See, in the year 450, if not in 350. Shortly after the year 600 the Pontifical Choir was recruited from the orphans of the city, but in 450 or 350 the *schola cantorum* was identical with the diocesan seminary. This ancient clerical school was dispossessed by Gregory because, he says: "It has for a long time been a reprehensible custom, and worthy of note, for the sacred ministry of singers, before entering into deacon's orders, to devote their whole time to the cultivation of their voices, altogether neglecting their office of preaching and of the distribution of alms; and the priests, each cultivating his organ to attain an edifying voice, irritating God, while they please the people with their accents." In order to reform the abuses he decrees that "deacons shall not sing at all except in the recitation of the Gospels in the Masses." From the time of Solomon, the levite, and in Christian times down to St. Gregory, the deacon was the precentor of the congregation, which (at least down to the Council of Laodicea) had the right to respond. Later the congregation was excluded from this privilege. Music, on higher and more scientific lines, was introduced, and trained singers, capable of responding to the calls of the new methods and the vaster repertoire, came into being. The monks, from an early period, began to systematise the singing of the offices which they set in a framework of antiphons calculated to make the psalms appropriate to the office of the day. At first, by an antiphon was understood the prelude, the psalm, and the gloria. The singing of offices was common in the East and West by the time St. Jerome had completed his *psalterium romanum* in the year 384, A.D. To swell the *corpus musicale* other non-liturgical devotions were introduced, and lastly the celebrant's part of the Mass was sung. It is evident that at the end of the fourth century the musical repertory of the Church was already vast and impressive. Among the Greeks and Romans the Alexandrian chant, half song, half speech, or a system of decorated monotonies, was encouraged until it became a matter of course. From the Alexandrian developed the Ambrosian, and from the latter the Solesmes Chant, which existed, as there is reason to believe, before the time of Gregory. The latter, which became the official Church Chant, evolved from the Ambrosian by degrees in the practice of choirs, and has come down to us indented with the name of its patron, Gregory the Great. Hence, the present Roman Choir is as much in continuity with the ancient choirs of the early centuries as the tree is with the plant or the man with the boy. There has been growth without doubt but it has been organic growth.

Many indulge the fond hope that time will do for them what they themselves neglect to do. But time is no creative or productive force; it does not do anything itself, but affords the active and energetic the opportunity to accomplish things.