

Parental Duty in Education

CARDINAL BOURNE'S LENTEN PASTORAL.

It is just a year since, immediately after the election of our Holy Father, Pius XI., we set before you some of the striking lessons which were the natural outcome of the accompanying circumstances of that significant election. To-day we send with this Pastoral Letter a copy of the first Encyclical Letter addressed by the Sovereign Pontiff to the Universal Church. Containing as it does the authoritative teaching and exhortation of Christ's Vicar upon earth, as he surveys the events which continue to sadden and to perplex the world, we desire that it be brought home to the minds and consciences of all our people. To this end we enjoin that it be read publicly in every church of the diocese, the text being carefully distributed over several Sundays during Lent; and that suitable instructions be based upon it, so that its meaning and importance may be made as clear as possible to the whole flock. Thus they will be able to form and fashion their own view of public events, and the influence which they may be able to exert upon them, in conformity with the living voice of him whom our Divine Master has chosen to be the Chief Pastor of His Church.

There is one pre-eminent danger to which the Holy Father alludes; and to this we would wish to direct your very special attention. "A worse thing than all has come to pass," he says, for "the habit of life which can be called Christian has in great measure disappeared." Here we have at once the root of the evils of the present day, and the reason of the insistence of the Catholic Church, in season and out of season, on the necessity of a truly Christian and Catholic education for all her children. In many countries such education is hampered to the point of destruction by hostile legislation. In others the liberty of the law has not been adequately used by Catholics, who, content with a traditional external adherence to the Church, have allowed young people to grow up without any real education in the knowledge and practice of their Faith, leaving them practically defenceless against the dangers of adolescent and adult life. In our own country it would be idle to maintain that those who attend the publicly provided schools receive an education that is Christian. Even of the schools which owe their existence to the efforts of non-Catholic religious organisations, there are very many where the teaching of religion is so vague in character that it can rarely succeed in leaving a definitely Christian impression upon the minds of those who receive such teaching. Thus, as we have declared on more than one recent occasion, the Christian tradition of England in matters both of belief and of conduct is growing weaker every day. For this reason the responsibility of Catholics grows greater in proportion, for it will rest with them to preserve, revive, and extend that Christian tradition; and this they will be able to do only if they succeed in maintaining it, in all its purity and vigor, in themselves and in their children. They must be the salt to preserve the whole mass, even as were the early Christians in the first centuries of the preaching of the Faith. For this reason we insist once again upon the principles of Catholic education, and upon the urgent need for all Catholics to conform to those principles in the education of their children.

There are two distinct and separate responsibilities in the education of Catholic children, though the one is dependent upon and grows out of the other. The first responsibility is that inherent in parenthood itself, which obliges all Catholic parents to bring up their children in the knowledge and practice of the Catholic religion, first by their living example, and secondly, in proportion to their own knowledge and opportunity, by actually teaching their children the truths of faith, and the precepts of God and of His Church. This is a responsibility which they may never wholly delegate to either priest or any other teacher. Although this is too often forgotten, it is their own inalienable right, privilege, and duty, of which they will have to render an account to God who has entrusted these children to their care. The second responsibility is the assigning to suitable teachers that part of the education of their children which they are unable, from want either of suitable knowledge or of sufficient leisure, to impart themselves. And if, as we must certainly do, we regard religion as an essential part of the education of

a Catholic boy or girl, it is obvious that no non-Catholic teacher, however high his moral character or extensive his knowledge, can ever really stand *in loco parentis* where Catholic children are concerned. In other words, no Catholic can delegate to any non-Catholic his own personal parental responsibility in this matter of education. Similarly, a non-Catholic is essentially incapable of accepting or receiving from a Catholic parent any delegation of this personal parental responsibility. If, therefore, for some urgent unavoidable cause a Catholic parent is obliged to allow his child to be taught by a non-Catholic teacher, he is bound to provide personally, or by some suitable Catholic representative, for the adequate teaching and safe-guarding of his child's faith and religion.

Catholics at non-Catholic Schools.

This principle is at the root of the discipline of the Catholic Church on the question of the frequentation by Catholics of non-Catholic schools, which was recently set forth again in the new Code of Canon Law, in the Canon which runs as follows:—

"Catholic children must not attend non-Catholic schools. . . . It is for the Bishop of the diocese alone to determine, in conformity with the instructions of the Holy See, in what circumstances, and with what safeguards against the danger of perversion, the frequentation of such schools may be tolerated."

The same doctrine was clearly enunciated by the bishops of England and Wales in 1905, and repeated in 1918. It is well to recall their words:—

"We desire to call the earnest attention of all Catholics to the grave departure from Catholic teaching and tradition, and to the very serious dangers to Catholic Faith and spirit, which are involved in the placing of Catholic children, of whatever class in life, in non-Catholic schools. Owing to the usually proximate nature of these dangers, it is under ordinary circumstances a grievous sin on the part of parents to expose their children to such risks, and this has been expressly declared in the instructions of the Holy See and of the Bishops of this Province. There is, not infrequently, also a grave sin of scandal; for when Catholics, and especially those in a prominent position, make use of non-Catholic schools, they affect injuriously the whole Catholic position, leading many to follow their example, and making it increasingly difficult to provide, maintain, and improve our own schools and colleges.

"We recognise, indeed, that in some rare cases where no other means of entering a particular profession can be found, parents may be justified in exposing their sons and daughters to such risks, provided that they take all possible precautions to render them remote; but we declare that these exceptional cases in no way justify a like course of action where preparation for a career in life may be obtained without any similar necessity of attending non-Catholic places of education. The social advantages to be gained at certain schools manifestly do not constitute such a necessity.

"No individual priest or confessor is entitled to decide where necessity of this nature exists, but the matter is one to be referred to the Ordinary of the diocese for his counsel and judgment.

"We again call upon the clergy and the laity alike to support by every means in their power our existing schools of all grades, and to make every effort to increase and improve them, and especially to establish secondary day schools in all large centres of population.

"We appeal to our flocks to adhere faithfully to those principles of loyalty to Church and Faith for which their forefathers made so many sacrifices, not only of worldly position and success, but even of life itself."

There is evident danger that these grave and binding admonitions may be forgotten.

Clearly, all cases cannot be judged alike. Attendance at a non-Catholic day school may in certain cases be a necessity, to be regretted indeed but hardly to be avoided. On the other hand, save in the case of boys entering for the Navy, we do not know of circumstances which would justify a Catholic parent in placing his child in a non-Catholic boarding school.

The cases are evidently quite different. Attendance at a day school involves, at most, withdrawal from home influence for a few hours on weekdays. Residence at a boarding school implies, on the contrary, severance from direct