

FEATURES OF THIS WEEK'S ISSUE

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MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIII. TO THE N.Z. TABLET.

Pergant Directores et Scriptores New Zealand Tablet, Apostolica Benedictione confortati, Religionis et Justitiae causam promovere per vias Veritatis et Pacis.

Die 4 Aprilis, 1900.

LEO XIII., P.M.

TRANSLATION.—Fortified by the Apostolic Blessing, let the Directors and Writers of the New Zealand Tablet continue to promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the ways of Truth and Peace.

April 4, 1900.

LEO XIII., Pope



THURSDAY, JULY 5, 1923.

PARENTS AND EDUCATION



HE Catholic Church is the guide for Catholics. Her loyal children accept her teaching without question: when they question it they cease to be loyal. She speaks with the authority of Christ; consequently they who flout her authority flout Christ Himself. In the matter of education the attitude of the Church is plain and uncompromising. She insists that parents shall have their children brought up as true Catholics ought to be brought up, and, for that reason, she sets her face determinedly against secular education which does not train children as Christians. The Church lays down her instructions clearly. It is the duty of parents to receive them with respect and obedience. She places on their individual consciences a grave obligation, and they are gravely responsible if they refuse to fulfil it. Plainly, she tells parents that on the right fulfilment of their duties in this matter of education depends in large measure not only their children's salvation but also their own. And the greater the dangers that surround us, the more emphatic is her teaching and the more serious the obligation it imposes.

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A parent asks: "Am I bound in conscience to send my children to a Catholic school?" The answer is, "Yes. You *are* bound in conscience." No Catholic parent will deny that God created us to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this life in order that we may be happy with Him in the everlasting life to come. That truth is fundamental, and if we once admit it we must admit its conclusions or cease to be reasonable. It means that we must admit, if we are sincere at all, that the end for which God made us is paramount, and that everything in this life ought to be governed by the necessity of attaining that end. There is no latitude for opinions here. It is a Catholic doctrine which we must receive if we are Catholics; and if we receive it we must acknowledge its consequences if we are true Catholics. In childhood the obligation urges. Consequently the good parent will feel bound to see that the children are taught to say their prayers, and to love God. In early school years, when the mind begins to discern between right and wrong, the Catholic parent will watch over the growing mind and be solicitous that virtuous habits are formed and that evil communications are avoided. In later school years, when adolescence and its dangers begin to threaten the peace and security of the soul, the need for watchfulness is greater and the parent's obligations graver. Education ought to be the development and training of all the faculties, and it ought to be a real discipline which will help towards the

formation of character. Now, as the character must be formed with a view to the attainment of our end, education which omits the most essential thing for that end is no education at all. It is plain that religion, and religion alone, can inform the mind with truth and discipline the will to habits of virtue in such a manner that a parent can with a good conscience feel satisfied that he is doing his duty by his children. Religion in education is necessary when the child begins to lisp its prayers: it is more necessary when the knowledge of good and evil comes with the dreadful power of sinning; it is most necessary when childhood is past and the youth is of an age to appreciate all the seductiveness of the world and the flesh which wage warfare against his soul. Coming back to the fundamental principle: the parent is bound by obedience to the Church and by charity towards himself and towards his children to secure for the latter a Catholic education both in childhood and in adolescence: and, if he is thus bound, he is guilty in the sight of God if he neglects the Church's warnings and sends his children to a non-Catholic school when Catholic education is available. The unchristian environment around us and the appalling spread of secularism in all departments of modern life are such a peril to Faith that we have no hesitation in saying that only an unnatural parent will defy the Church and endanger his own and his child's salvation by neglecting his duty in this matter.

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The position is simply this: To uphold secular education as good enough for your child is to affirm by deed if not by word that there is no life hereafter, or, that if there is, you are not concerned about it either for yourself or for your child. That tacit profession of unbelief is made by every Catholic parent who defies the teaching of the Church and the warnings of his pastors in this connection. There is no separating religion and true education, and every system that tries to separate them fails. The French Commissioners, English and American statesmen and judges, our own magistrates all tell us that secular education is condemned by its results and that banishing God from the schools means banishing virtue from the souls of individuals and from the homes of the nation. It is useless to say that Sunday-schools and Sunday instructions are sufficient to supply what is wanting in the secular schools. The facts prove that when for six days of the week the children are taught that God does not matter they pay but scant attention to the lessons they receive on the seventh. When, through the week, the mind is instructed on principles that ignore religion, the foundation of religious indifference is laid and the lessons of the Sunday will not prevent the final shutting out of God from the mental horizon. There is no middle course for a Catholic parent. He admits that salvation is the essential thing. By that admission he must also admit that education which does not tend to secure salvation is wrong. Parental weakness, and parental ambition will try to find excuses, but the true and loyal Catholic, who does not go against his reason, will admit at once that no excuse is admissible, and that he would be his child's worst enemy did he send him to a school which might endanger his Faith. It is only the Catholic who does not know what Faith is, who does not realise what salvation is, that will, for the sake of some imaginary advantage of a temporal nature, turn his back on the Catholic school and plunge the child into the midst of the temptations with which the secular system is necessarily surrounded. The Duke of Wellington was not a Catholic, yet his opinion of the effort to separate religion from education was expressed in the well-known words: "You will only succeed in training up a number of clever devils." Good Catholic parents certainly do not want to rear clever devils. And the parents who are satisfied to have their children trained on those dangerous lines condemned by the Duke can hardly object if they are told that, notwithstanding their outward professions, they are anything but good Catholics, for they are giving concrete proof that to them the words of Christ mean nothing:

"What will it avail a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?"