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# The Catholic Journal

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## SEAL OF THE CONFESSORIAL.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE CAN IT BE BROKEN.

Wherein the Secrets of the Confessional Differ from Professional Secrets.

A writer in the Providence Visitor throws light upon some cloudy comments and deductions on and from a recent event in England where a doctor was heavily fined for disclosing professional secrets that came to his knowledge in the sick room. We quote from his excellent essay as follows:

Auent the case of Dr. Playfair, the eminent London practitioner who was lately mulcted in heavy damages for betraying the secrets of the sick room, the secular papers, English and American, have been laying down the law about medical "privileges" with singular emphasis and unanimity. They assure us that the secrets of a physician are as sacred as those of a confessor. Now this doctrine is quite incorrect. Between the secrets of the sick room and the secrets of the confessional there are differences so profound—differences in nature and extent—that it makes one wonder how the newspapers could fail to note them.

Secrets are of three kinds. By a natural secret is meant any fact learned either by chance or by inquiry whose revelation will work injury to the fair fame of the person or persons concerned. Again, if the owner of a secret, learning that another person is in possession of the facts, persuades that person to give a guarantee of silence, we have a case of secret of promise. Again, suppose the owner of a secret, wishing to enlist the services of a professional man in complications arising out of that secret, exposes the whole matter, the professional man so consulted is bound to silence not only by the law of natural secrets but also by an implicit contract. Here we have a case of a secret of trust. Secrets of trust must be sacredly kept against all comers, unless their keeping entails injury to some innocent outside party or to the community at large. The reason of the exception is easy to see. When there is a conflict of rights, the better right prevails. The rights of the innocent are to be preferred before those of the guilty, and those of the commonwealth to those of an individual. Dr. Playfair was convicted of violating a secret of trust. His case, apparently, was one to which the exceptions just noted did not apply.

Now we turn to the consideration of the secret of the confessional, and, in passing, we warn our readers against certain novelists who, straining after dramatic effect, have presumed to handle this tempting but difficult subject.

Like the physician and the lawyer, the confessor is bound to secrecy with regard to disreputable facts learned in the exercise of his official functions. He is held by the law of natural secrets and by the law of implicit contract. But he is bound by another and mightier title, the title of religion. So that a betrayal of confidence by a confessor would, in addition to the two-fold sin of breaking the laws just mentioned, entail the further guilt of sacrilege. Again, a professional man may, under certain circumstances, and in despite of the implicit contract, disclose a professional secret. But the law of silence upon a confessor is absolute—admits of no possible exception. Neither the interests of innocent persons, nor the interests of church or state, nor the confessor's own interests, nor yet the interests of the penitent himself, can ever justify the violation of sacramental silence. This law holds after the death of the penitent. Moreover, unless the penitent give license to speak, the confessor, outside the tribunal, is bound to silence towards him precisely as towards other persons. The secret of the confessional is God's secret. And because this is so, not only is the confessor bound to keep it, but also all those persons who either by accident or design or by report come to a knowledge of a sin related in the sacred tribunal. Interpreters, those who overheard a confession either by accident or design, imposters masquerading as genuing priests, those to whom such persons relate what they know, are all bound by the seal.

We have said that the confessor is bound by the divine law to silence. The precept is implicit, but none the less rigorous. It is, moreover, not merely positive precept extrinsic to the sacrament, but follows from the very institution of the sacrament. Christ, who has bound men to the confession of their grievous sins as a condition for obtaining forgiveness of them, has also appointed the means, without which the end He proposed to Himself in setting up the tribunal of penance could not be obtained. Now the seal is such a means. Suppose He had left no further obligations upon confessors than those under which professional men are bound. Knowing that confessors might, in the interests of the innocent or of the community, betray their confidence, how many sinners would consent to go to confession? Odious enough even with its present safeguards, confession without the divine law of the seal would be practically useless and altogether intolerable. As a matter of fact, De Lugot tells us that he remembers to have read that among the Abyssinians confession had quite fallen into disuse owing to the loose practices of confessors among the schismatics.

Some have imagined that the obligation of sacramental silence is of ecclesiastical law. The Church has, to be sure, legislated on the subject, but her legislation is supplementary rather than fundamental—just like the law of confession and communion. If the obligation were fundamentally of ecclesiastical origin, then the Pope, as the supreme ecclesiastical legislator, could dispense from it. But no Pope has ever done so, nor will any Catholic consent to hold that any Pope can ever do so. The fidelity of confessors to the sacred trust laid upon them by the founder of the tribunal of penance is one of the glories of the priesthood. There have been priests who fell away from their high estate, but God seems, in the interest of the sacrament of the resurrection, to have exercised a special providence to insure their silence. Among the saints there is one martyr, at least, to the seal—St. John Nepomucene, who was put to death by the king of Bohemia for refusing to reveal the confession of the queen. Only a week or two ago the Sacred Heart Review retold the touching story of the Polish priest, who, when falsely charged with murder, and scorned to betray the confidence of the real criminal, submitted to degradation at the hands of the bishop and to twenty years imprisonment in the mines of Siberia. At last the truth was told, and an order of release was forwarded. But it came too late. The priest had died—a martyr to his fidelity.

### NUNS BACK FROM LEPER LAND.

Two Sisters of St. Francis Return from Hawaii for a Rest.

SYRACUSE, May 26.—Sister Ludwica, with seven other sisters of the order of St. Francis, left Syracuse for the Hawaiian Islands thirteen years ago to nurse the lepers. With Sister De Sales who left here five years ago, she returned to this city today broken in health and seeking rest and recuperation. Sister Ludwica was told by the physicians that the change of climate, the trip and a complete rest would restore her health. All told fourteen sisters have gone from this city, and Sister Ludwica was among the last. They knew Father Damian well and speak highly of his life of self sacrifice. A brother of his is now in charge of the island whereon he spent his life for the benefit of the hopeless lepers. The sisters from this city are on duty in Honolulu and the three islands, to which lepers are sent when the disease becomes pronounced. The two Sisters visiting here are stationed at the Leper hospital in Honolulu. One island is set apart for the most advanced cases, and there are on this island two of the Sisters from here. It is doubtful if these will ever again be permitted to leave the island. With extraordinary care and the knowledge of the disease that has been acquired in recent years, the Sisters say there is little danger of catching the disease, and none of the party of fourteen from here expect to contract it.

Loud Call for Boston Shopping Bags At Likly's. New assortment at 60c and up. No. 155 East Main street.

## LAST OF MAY.

TO THE CHILDREN OF MARY.

An old subscriber requests the privilege of seeing Father Ryan's "Last of May" in the CATHOLIC JOURNAL as being particularly appropriate for next Sunday reading.

In the mystical dim of the temple,  
In the dream-haunted dim of the day,  
The sunlight spoke soft to the shadows  
And said: "With my gold and your gray  
Let us meet at the shrine of the Virgin,  
And ere her fair feet pass away  
Let us weave there a mantle of glory,  
To deck the last evening of May."

The tapers were lit on the altar,  
With garlands of lilies between,  
And the steps leading up to the statue  
Flashed bright with the roses' red sheen.  
The sunbeam came down from the heavens  
Like angels, to hallow the scene,  
And they seemed to kneel down with the shadows  
That crept to the shrine of the Queen.

The singers, their hearts in their voices,  
Had chanted the anthems of old,  
And the last trembling wave of the Vespers  
On the far shore of silence had rolled,  
And there—at the Queen-Virgin's altar—  
The sun wore the mantle of gold.  
While the hands of the twilight were weaving  
A fringe for the flash of each fold.

And wondrously, in the deep silence  
Three banners hung peaceful and low—  
They bore the bright blue of the heavens—  
They wore the pure white of the snow—  
And beneath them fair children were kneeling  
Whose faces, with graces aglow,  
Seemed sinless, in land that is sinful  
And woeful in life full of woe.

Their heads wore the veil of the lily,  
Their brows wore the wreath of the rose,  
And their hearts, like their flutterless banners,  
Were stilled in a holy repose.  
Their shadowless eyes were uplifted,  
Whose glad gaze would never disclose  
That from eyes that are most like the heavens  
The dark rain of tears once fell down.

The banners were borne to the railing,  
Beneath them, a group from each band,  
And they bent their bright folds for the blessing  
That fell from the priest's lifted hand.  
And assigned the thine-fair, silken standards  
With a sign never to ead withstand.  
What stirred them? The breeze of the evening?  
Or a breath from the far angel-land?

Then came, two by two, to the altar,  
The young, and the pure and fair,  
Their faces the mirror of Heaven,  
Their hands folded meekly in prayer;  
They came for a simple blue ribbon,  
For love of Christ's Mother to wear;  
And I believe, with the Children of Mary,  
The Angels of Mary were there.

Ah, faith! simple faith of the children!  
You still shame the faith of the old!  
Ah, love! simple love of the little,  
You still warm the love of the cold!  
And the beautiful God who is wandering  
Finds a home in the hearts of the children  
And a rest with the lambs of the fold.

Sweet a voice: was it wafted from Heaven?  
Heard you ever the sea when it sings  
Where it sleeps on the shore in the night-time?  
Heard you never the hymns the breeze  
Brings  
From the hearts of a thousand bright  
Summers?  
Heard you ever the bird when she springs  
To the clouds, till she seems to be only  
A song of shadow on wings?

Came a voice: and an "Ave Maria"  
Rose out of a heart rapture-thrilled;  
And in the embrace of the music  
The souls of a thousand lay stilled.  
A voice with the tones of an angel,  
Never flower such sweetness distilled  
It faded away—but the temple  
With its perfume of worship was filled.

Then back to the Queen-Virgin's altar  
The white veils swept on, two by two,  
And the holiest halo of Heaven  
Flashed out from the ribbon of blue;  
And they laid down the wreaths of the roses  
Whose hearts were as pure as their hue,  
Ah! They to the Christ are true!  
Whose loves to the Mother are true!

And thus, in the dim of the temple,  
In the dream-haunted dim of the day,  
The Angels and Children of May  
Mater the Queen's Feet passed away,  
Where the sunbeams kneel down with the shadows,  
And wove with their gold and their gray  
A mantle of graces and of glory  
For the last holy evening of May.

FATHER RYAN.  
A Leather Watch Chain  
Is what you want when biking. We have them at from 25c to \$1 each. Likly's, 155 East Main street.

Ladies' Shoes, 30c and 75c.  
Sizes 1-3 to 4, worth from \$1.50 to \$4; odd lots. J. W. Maser, 196 East Main street.  
L. C. Langie  
Has removed his coat office from the junction of East Main street and East avenue to 298 East Main, opposite Elm street.  
Oxford Ties 25c, 50c, 75c.  
Ladies', misses' and children's; 11-12 to 4 in ladies'; all sizes in the misses' and children's; a great big bargain. J. W. Maser, 196 East Main street.

## AT ST. BERNARD'S.

Five Students Invested with the Order of Deaconship—Priests to be Ordained Saturday.

At St. Bernard's Theological Seminary Wednesday morning five students were invested with the order of Deaconship, conferred upon them by Rt. Rev. Bishop McQuaid. The ceremony was performed at 8:30 o'clock in the presence of the priests and students at the seminary.

Those who were invested are: John O'Brien, Jeremiah Maloy, Michael Dwyer, John Kelly and John Brennan.

At 9 o'clock this morning nine students of St. Bernard's seminary will be ordained as priests and seven will receive minor orders. The ceremony of ordination is one of the most impressive in the Catholic church. The students are ordained within the sanctuary and the Bishop will conduct the services, assisted by the priests of the diocese and the students of St. Bernard's and St. Andrew's seminary. Those who will be raised to the dignity of priesthood are: Michael Dwyer, J. J. Gibbons, John B. Shellburn, John H. O'Brien, Jeremiah A. Maloy, J. J. Brennan, Stephen J. McPadden, Sebastian Magliari and John W. Kelly.

The following named students will receive minor orders: Michael O. Wall, John Farrell, F. Shied, Eugene Livorelli, James Kennedy, William Ryan and L. E. Lapham.

After the ordination exercises are concluded the newly ordained priests and deacons will return to the seminary, where they will receive their friends and relatives. The young priests will celebrate their first masses next Sunday morning in the various Catholic churches of the city, assisted by the deacons and sub-deacons. Most of the priests will be retained in this diocese to relieve and assist the pastors in some of the overcrowded parishes.

It is expected that one of the priests will be sent to Auburn to fill the vacancy caused by Father Netz's removal to this city.

## CARDINAL GIBBONS.

A Letter in Which He Treats of Civil and Religious Rights.

WASHINGTON, May 18.—Through Rev. Dr. Stafford of St. Patrick's church, this city, a prominent republican, who held a foreign mission under President Harrison, recently addressed several questions to Cardinal Gibbons relative to the attacks of the A. P. A. on the Catholic citizens of the country. The cardinal sent the following reply:

BALTIMORE, May 18, 1896.

My Dear Sir: It is the duty of the leaders of political parties to express themselves, without any equivocation, on the principles of religious freedom which underlie our constitution. Catholics are devoted to both the great political parties of the country, and each individual is left entirely to his own conscience. We are proud to say that, in the long history of the government of the United States, the great Catholic church has never used or perverted its acknowledged power by seeking to make politics subservient to its own advancement.

Moreover, it is our proud boast that we have never interfered with the civil and political rights of any who differ from us in religion. We demand the same rights for ourselves and nothing more, and will be content with nothing less.

Not only is it the duty of all parties distinctly to set their faces against the false and un-American principles thrust forward of late, but much as I would regret the entire identification of any religious body as such with any political party, I am convinced that the members of a religious body whose rights, civil and religious, are attacked, will naturally and unanimously espouse the cause of the party which has the courage openly to avow the principles of civil and religious liberty according to the constitution. Patience is a virtue. But it is not the only virtue. When pushed too far it may degenerate into pusillanimity.

Yours faithfully,  
JAMES CARDINAL GIBBONS.

Visit Likly's Belt Counter For the latest styles in leather belts and buckles. New store, No. 155 East Main street.

## CATHOLIC SOCIETIES.

What is Going on in the Various Societies. Calendars for Next Week.

### NEW YORK GRAND COUNCIL.

Payment of Assessments and 5. GRAND SECRETARY'S OFFICE, HORSESHOE, N. Y., May 25, 1896.

Notice of assessments Nos. 1 and 5 was issued from this office April 1, 1896. It was received from the branches in the following order:

Branch	Assessment No. 1	Assessment No. 5
April 11—Branch 1	\$1.50	\$1.50
" 12	1.50	1.50
" 13	1.50	1.50
" 14	1.50	1.50
" 15	1.50	1.50
" 16	1.50	1.50
" 17	1.50	1.50
" 18	1.50	1.50
" 19	1.50	1.50
" 20	1.50	1.50
" 21	1.50	1.50
" 22	1.50	1.50
" 23	1.50	1.50
" 24	1.50	1.50
" 25	1.50	1.50
" 26	1.50	1.50
" 27	1.50	1.50
" 28	1.50	1.50
" 29	1.50	1.50
" 30	1.50	1.50

The forty days that elapsed since the last meeting of the Council have been productive of the following amount received during the month:

Month	Amount
April 17	\$1,000.00
" 18	1,000.00
" 19	1,000.00
" 20	1,000.00
" 21	1,000.00
" 22	1,000.00
" 23	1,000.00
" 24	1,000.00
" 25	1,000.00
" 26	1,000.00
" 27	1,000.00
" 28	1,000.00
" 29	1,000.00
" 30	1,000.00

Total amount received during the month \$12,000.00. Balance forward \$1,000.00. Total \$13,000.00.

Balance forward \$1,000.00. Total \$13,000.00. To Grand Treasurer \$11,000.00. General fund \$2,000.00.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT. Amount of assets that are due to the treasury of the Council. Amount of general fund, this date. Responsibility assumed by the Council.

Annual Meeting of the Council. The annual meeting of the Council of this city will be held on Monday, June 1st, 1896, at 8 o'clock, P. M., at the Grand Central Hotel.

Yours faithfully, J. G. McMillan, Grand Secretary of Branch 125.

Brothers Sullivan and Downey were initiated into 125 Tuesday evening.

J. G. McMillan, Grand Secretary of Branch 125, will be at the rooms of the Branch on Monday evening, June 1st, for the purpose of receiving assessments. May 30, 1896.

By order of Branch.

Brothers Sullivan and Downey were initiated into 125 Tuesday evening.

By order of Branch.