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THE MIDNIGHT MASS

Official instruction has been received from Rome detailing how Catholics are to observe the ceremonial closing of the year and the century, on the night of December 31. It is issued by Cardinal Cretoni, prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Rites, and signed also by Archbishop Sogaro, secretary of the congregation. The decree is from the Pope, dated November 16, and addressed to all the world.

"Now that the present age is drawing to a close," it begins, "and a new one is about to begin, it is highly proper that all who have been redeemed by Him in every part of the world should be solemnly consecrated to the King of Ages, Jesus Christ, in order that gratitude may be shown for the special favors received from Him in the past, and also that in those troublesome times He may, through His mercy and clemency, grant even stronger aids to entering happily on the future."

"What our Holy Father granted a year ago, by anticipation, he also permits by the same decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, dated the 13th day of last November, viz., that at midnight, which ushers in January of the year 1901, the most august sacrament of the Eucharist may be exposed for adoration in churches and chapels, and that in its presence one Mass of the feast of the Circumcision of our Lord and the octave of the Nativity may be read or sung; more than that, moreover, the faithful, by special privilege, receive Holy Communion either during or outside of the Mass.

"While thinking of some new means of increasing the piety of the faithful in connection with an event so solemn, the Holy Father learned that many prelates and pious sodalities anxiously desire that the faithful of Christ, moved by an eagerness to participate in the rich treasury of spiritual indulgences, should everywhere be invited to come and adore the blessed Eucharist, and thus strive to repair the injuries done to the divine Majesty, and unite themselves closer to His most sweet Heart.

"As this was in most perfect accordance with his own wishes, the Holy Father has benignly granted that a plenary indulgence may be gained by all the faithful of Christ who, having properly approached the Sacrament of Penance and received Holy Communion in a church or chapel where the most holy Eucharist is reserved, shall spend any full hour they please between midnight of December 31 and the noon of January 1 before the most august sacrament, exposed to public adoration, and shall, moreover, offer pious prayers to God for the intentions of His Holiness.

"How long the adorable Eucharist should remain exposed is left by His Holiness to the prudence of the ordinaries, provided that time be within the twelve hours specified above."

"How do we make our morning offering?" asked Father Gignam, S. J., "How many of us make it in a drowsy manner, scarcely conscious of what we are saying, or with our mind occupied with thoughts of what is likely to occur during the day? In making our morning offering our words must mean what they say. I offer my prayer, I mean to pray a real, earnest, heartfelt prayer, such as would satisfy the Sacred Heart, and for all the intentions which may please Him; I offer my work, and I mean to work as if I were to be judged by my work, and by my earnestness in exterior labor to edify and encourage those who come in contact with me. Let no one, when he humbly, imagine himself too little, too unimportant, to be capable of influencing others. Not one of us should come in contact with anyone who leaves some impression from his life, and his work, and his prayer."

offering ought to be earnestly meant, so often repeated, that it becomes part of our daily lives."

The list of Anglican clergymen who have "gone over" since the issue of the Papal Bull in denial of their Orders is slowly lengthening, says the Daily Chronicle. A new name to be added to the list is that of Mr. Bird, whose secession becomes more noteworthy when it is added that he has been acting as chaplain to Lord Halifax, the president of the English Church Union, and the man through whose overtures at Rome the Commission on Anglican Orders was called into being.

The largest Catholic fair ever held in Denver diocese, closed on a recent Saturday evening. Over \$10,000 were realized. This sum does not include donations of money, for these were not accepted.

Very Rev. John J. Fedigan, O. S. A., provincial, who has been suffering from a severe attack of rheumatism, has almost entirely recovered and is able to be about.

THE HOLY DOOR.

Our Holy Father Leo Will Officiate at Its Closing.

Despite the hard labors of the past year, Dr. Laponi while offering no assurances for the future, asserts that the Pope's general health is as good now as it has been at any time within two years.

No attempt is made by his medical attendants to curb Pope Leo's desires in any direction.

"I have not got by the point, Laponi, where I shall take orders from you," the Pontiff recently said, joyously, when his faithful adviser cautioned him more emphatically than usual "If you really want me to live let me do as I please."

Pope Leo is now preparing for the function of closing the holy door on Christmas eve, with all the pomp and ceremony of the opening a year ago. The bricks to be used are white, and about twice the usual size. On one side they will bear the papal coat of arms in bas-relief, and on the other an inscription in Latin, recording the fact that Leo XIII. opened and shut the holy door during the jubilee year.

According to the Tribune, usually accurately informed regarding Vatican matters the Peter's pence of the holy year will reach \$4,000,000. Up to Oct. 31, \$3,200,000 had been received. Numerous conferences have been held by Leo and the cardinals to consider the best way of investing the offering. The Pope, who was greatly shocked by the large theft at the apostolic palace some time ago, advocates an investment where safety rather than high interest shall be the principal consideration.

CONVERTS ORGANIZE.

To Foster Fraternal Relations Among Those Who Have Made Sacrifices for the Faith

An organization composed of a number of men and women of New York city and vicinity who have been converted from Protestantism to the Roman Catholic faith has just been formed in that city. The organization was effected when twenty two recent converts met at the Church of the Paulist Fathers last Monday evening to informally discuss the suggestion which had been made by several of the most prominent ones, looking to the establishment of some sort of an association wherein those who had given up their former religious connections might find mutual benefit.

The Rev. George Deshon, Superior General of the Paulist Fathers, acted as moderator of the meeting and it was voted to form an organization to be called the Catholic Converts' League of America. Dr. Benjamin F. DeCosta, formerly rector of the Episcopal church of St. John the Evangelist, New York, was elected President of the league. George D. Mackay, a member of the New York Stock Exchange, was elected Vice-President; Miss Annie Burrill, of Bridgeport, Conn., a young woman of wealth and position in that place and a former ardent worker in the Episcopal church among the poor, was chosen Secretary, and S. Coates, member of the firm of thread manufacturers bearing his name, was chosen Treasurer.

Among those present at the meeting were: Miss Elizabeth Miller, Miss Sarah Deshon, William Harris, an artist; Walter G. Hooke, of Colby University, Waterville, Me.; Walter Waters, an organist, and his wife; Frank Vermilye, a lawyer; Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Jones, Caryl Coleman, Jesse Albert Locke, once on the staff of the clergy of Trinity Episcopal church, New York city; Dr. Henry A. Adams, formerly rector of the Episcopal church of the Redeemer in Manhattan, and others.

The object of the organization is to give the members an accurate knowledge of the Catholic religion and to stimulate them to the regular practice of its duties; to propagate the Catholic faith by personal example and social intercourse, by the establishment of Catholic libraries, by the circulation and distribution of Catholic literature and the support of non-Catholic mission work for the bringing of other Protestants into the fold; to foster fraternal relations among converts and to assist those who have made sacrifices for the faith. Said one of the members of the league: "Another important feature of the future work will be the gathering of converts as such, for it will serve to bring to the notice of the world and the great body of Catholics and non-Catholics the high character of the men and women who come into the Church through intellectual conviction. They have all, though severally and individually, worked their way out from

the prejudices of early education and the restraining attachments of friends and relatives into a position in which very often their only consolations are rest and peace of heart that come to the possession of the truth."

CONVERTS CONVENE

THEY MISS THE SOCIAL SIDE OF PROTESTANTISM.

Convert Leagues Being Established in Various Cities of the United States—About Forty Thousand Received Into the Catholic Church Annually.

It is timely to suggest anew the convention of Converts. Little groups of converts are gathering in the large centres of population for the purpose of giving prominence to the idea of conversion as well as with the idea of extending a warm hand of welcome to those who have braved the condemnation of friends by becoming Catholics. We who are born in the faith and are accustomed to the democratic methods of our churches find it very hard to appreciate the loneliness of converts when the first flush of conversion has worn away.

They have been very much accustomed to the social life in non-Catholic churches. One of the principal means of holding Protestant bodies together is the social bond. The fact of the matter is so much has this social factor entered into the life of the churches that there is little else left. They have become social clubs. When one disentangles himself from all these obligations and side functions and for convenience sake comes back to the old Mother Church where, after all, it is the religious element that is cultivated and the social side ignored, he is impressed with a sense of utter loneliness.

A very highly educated convert said to me the other day—she had been a Catholic but seven months—"Oh," she said, "I have been afflicted with utter desolation since I became a Catholic. If I go into a Protestant church, some one always comes to speak to me, invites me to a festival and makes me feel at home, but since I have been going to the Catholic church no one has even so much as spoken to me. I go to mass every Sunday because I know it is my duty and I come away with a sense of having done what I should for God. There is not one bit of human comfort in it all for me. All my friends go elsewhere, and they who still think I am sane tell me of the charming people they meet and of the agreeable chats with their clergyman, but I have to tread my path alone. I do not in any sense regret the step I have taken and God very largely makes up to me of his own sweetness for the human pleasures I have left behind, but I see no reason why there should not be a few more attractions from a human point of view in becoming a Catholic."

It is so, and if these "Convert Leagues" that are forming in our large cities do no more good than the extending of a cordial hand grasp to new comers they will have achieved a good thing.

They will do more. They will give prominence to the idea of conversion. They will let the world see the calibre of the men and the women who leave all for conscience sake and come into the church. They will be more powerful incentives to many others who are hesitating, urging them to make the important step. The formation of Convert Leagues in various cities will be the material from which a convention will be gathered. We hope before long to see this project materialize.

When it does gather it will be a revelation to many to see the number and the high character of the delegates who will be accredited to it. There are in the seminaries of this country as many as a hundred earnest, intelligent young men who have become convinced of the hollowness of Protestantism as a religion and have shaken the dust of it off their feet and have come where there is peace for their minds and solace for their hearts.

These are all converts within the last few years. There are thousands among the devout laity who, forgetting the things that are behind, have pressed on to the supernatural prize and many of these are in high station as well as in low station. Some of them have sacrificed the dearest things of life, as only great souls can sacrifice in order to be at peace with their own conscience. A very close estimate of the number of converts received into the Church in this country every year places the number at 40,000.

Over and above the fruits of the ordinary ministry the missions are reaping a glorious harvest. There are thirty or forty priests who are exclusively engaged in these missions and it is no unusual occurrence nowadays to receive as many as thirty or forty converts as the direct result of these missions to say nothing of all of the hundred or more who are disabused of their prejudices. These latter are received by their regular clergy sooner or later, or are "compelled to enter" when the next mission comes along.

At a recent mission given in Richmond, Va., by the Paulist, Father Conway, forty-two were received and as many more left under instruction. It will not take many years at this rate to create a great movement that will bear on its bosom a mighty throng.

REV. A. P. DOYLE.

POPE LEO XIII A LOVER OF FLOWERS.

Our Holy Father is a real lover of flowers. When he allows himself some recreation (and this is generally when his physician has ordered rest) he spends the time, if possible, in the Vatican gardens. With gentle touch he will raise the blossoms for inspection, remove dead petals or leaves, almost caressing his favorite plants, before which he often stands in lengthy contemplation.

FIVE MINUTE SERMON.

SHORT INSTRUCTIONS ON THE GOSPEL BY A REVEREND FATHER.

Gospel, St. Luke, ii. 38 40.

In today's Gospel we are told of the predictions of Simeon and Anna, made when the Child Jesus was presented in the temple in compliance with the law which required the presentation of every first-born.

Simeon recognized in Jesus Christ the Son of the Eternal Father, and therefore adored and glorified Him and awaited His blessing and the application of His merits and grace. He then did not bless Christ; he blessed Joseph and Mary, to whom he foretold the heavenly favors and graces relative to their high office and to the arduous duties imposed on them. Anna said that the Child was indeed the expected Messiah, the Son of God, clothed in our flesh; that He came to take away the sins of the world and to redeem the human race from the slavery of Satan and from eternal death. All this she told to those pious souls who, resting on the faith of the patriarchs and trusting in the promises of the prophets, believed and hoped in the Christ to come, and awaited from Him the redemption of afflicted Israel.

These old people, Simeon and Anna, led a holy life, and always believed in and hoped for Jesus Christ to come. They obtained the grace to see Him with their own eyes and to press Him to their breasts, and at the proper time were enlightened by the Holy Ghost to recognize Him and announce Him to others.

If we begin from childhood to lead a holy life and persevere, as Simeon and Anna did, in good works, we can, like them, press to our breasts Jesus Christ in spirit and truth; we will obtain light and be able to make Him known to many.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

GOSPEL: St. Luke ii. 21.—"And after eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus, which was ratified by the angel, before He was conceived in the womb."

FROM THE FAR NORTHWEST.

St. Patrick's Orphanage, Prince Albert, Sask., N. W. T., Canada, Dec. 17th, 1900.

EDITOR CATHOLIC JOURNAL:

DEAR SIR:—Permit me, in the name of our humble orphanage, to give expression to the hope that you may celebrate the holy feast of Christmas in peace and happiness.

Gratitude towards our noble benefactors prompts us to add to our greetings a pledge of our interest in their welfare. Consequently, we bind ourselves to have holy mass offered every first Friday of the month for them, whether living or dead, those masses to begin in January, 1901. Our children, too, shall recite daily a special prayer for the same intention. Benefactors shall also participate in the prayers, good works and sufferings of the community, and of the inmates of the home.

Begging the dear Infant Jesus to bless you and to reserve for you that unfading crown of bliss promised to the merciful, and imploring a remembrance in your prayers,

I remain,
Gratefully yours in our Divine Lord,
EDWARD M. COURBIS, O. M. I.,
Director.

A FAMILIAR CALENDAR.

The 1901 edition of the Columbia desk calendar is being distributed by the American Bicycle Co., Columbia Sales Department, Hartford, Conn. It will be sent to any address upon receipt of five 2-cent stamps. This unique and useful compilation has been issued annually for the past sixteen years and it has come to be regarded as an indispensable article in many business offices and homes.

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BAKER THEATRE.

At the Baker, for the first three nights of next week, with New Year's and Wednesday matinees, will be presented the sensational romantic drama entitled "Under the Red Robe." This piece has been most favorably received wherever it has been brought out, and with a company of acknowledged merit and stage settings in keeping with the character of the piece, it cannot fail to win the favor of a Rochester audience. The house will be dark on Thursday night, but on Friday and Saturday evenings, with daily matinees, Al Fields' unexcelled minstrel troupe will appear in a repertoire of the choicest diversions pertaining to minstrelsy, and it is safe to say that they will be greeted with full houses.

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