

PRIESTLY VOCATIONS

ARCHBISHOP KANE SPEAKS FORCIBLY ON THE SUBJECT

At Kenrick Seminary, St. Louis on Thanksgiving Day—The Duty of Parents Regarding the Matter Made Plain by the Scholarly Prelate.

"The harvest, indeed, is great, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore, the Lord of the harvest that He send laborers into His Harvest."

These words, My Brethren, are addressed to us as well as to the disciples, who heard them fall from the sacred lips of our Divine Lord. They contain three facts:—three great truths of the spiritual order. They tell us that there is a vast multitude of souls to be saved and that there are but few laboring for their salvation; that the laborers in this great work must be sent by God—and that it is our duty to pray that He will send laborers to gather in this vast harvest.

It is of faith that our Lord died for the salvation of all mankind. In His redeeming love He embraced all without exception. All were present to His Divine mind when He declared the harvest great indeed. It is likewise of faith that the ordinary means for securing the salvation purchased by Our Lord have been placed by Him in His Holy Church. In the supernatural as in the natural order, He is pleased to work through secondary causes or agents. His ministers. Grand as is the work in which they are engaged, He bewails the fewness of their number. The work of directly co-operating with Christ in the salvation of immortal souls, which is the work of His ministers, surpasses in sublimity not only all human, but all angelic conception. No wonder the laborer in this all holy work is called another Christ. And yet, while every profession of secular life is filled to overflowing with aspirants for its honor or emoluments, Our Lord complains that only a few devote themselves to the sublimest of all callings—the salvation of souls. Peering through the veil of futurity, He saw doubtless that in our day, too, though the harvest is great, indeed, the laborers would be few. Let us, Brethren, require into some of the reasons for this dearth of evangelical workmen.

We know, of course, that the call to so holy a work must come from God. He calls now as He called in the days of the Apostles; and as He sent those first laborers into the harvest, so now, through His Church, He continues to send others upon this world-redeeming mission. Hence, the exhortation of Christ that we pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into His harvest, and this is the second great truth expressed by our Savior in the words of my text. To His Apostles our Lord said: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." John xv. 16. In His epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul declares: "Neither to any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron was." Nav. more, he tells us in the same place, that our Lord himself "did not glorify himself that He might be made a High Priest, but He (His Father) said to Him, 'Thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech.'"

The workings of divine grace in the human soul are usually silent, mysterious, not subject to rule, but real and convincing. God speaks to our soul, not in the language of emn, but in a voice that the soul herself understands. We may not be able to analyze those interior whisperings or to translate them into human words, but we know their meaning and feel their force. The priest of God may not be able to convince you of this divine vocation, but of that divine vocation he himself has a deep, irresistible conviction. Usually this conviction germinates in the love of God, which he cherishes in his innocent, youthful heart; it buds forth in holy desires to live and live for the good God and to turn other hearts to love and serve God here and to praise and bless Him for all eternity. These desires are strengthened as the years go by—fostered, too, by pious parents and encouraged by zealous pastors, until interpreted, and confirmed by the watchful confessor. When the young Levite kneels before the Bishop to receive the sacramental grace and character, he knows full well that he is obeying the voice of the Master calling him to labor in gathering a harvest of souls, for to his spiritual guide he believes the words of our Lord addressed to him: "He that heareth you, heareth me."

These worldly minded Catholics are found directly among those who have the means to give an ecclesiastical education to their children. They wish to see their children rise to eminence in secular professions. They wish them to gain wealth and position and the applause of men. Not, I say, that they underestimate the sublime dignity of the Christian Priesthood, but they themselves are so enamored with the glare of worldly honors and the tinsel of human praise that they imagine their children will be happy only in the attainment of these passing objects of worldly ambition. Hence they are indeed few vocations amongst those possessed of an abundance of worldly goods. Perhaps, could we read the dealings of God with human souls, we should rather say, to the rich as well as to the poor, vocations are given. But so often they are not fostered, on the contrary they are stifled. When a boy hears at home nothing of the glorious privileges of the Sacred Priesthood, but has held up to him from infancy to youth and manhood only visions of earthly glory and projects of worldly aggrandizement, would he obey and not rather seek to strangle any call, however clear, however unmistakable, to follow the Divine Master and labor for the salvation of souls? Would he not be most apt to imitate the young man whom our Blessed Lord called to follow Him, but "who went away sad, because he had many possessions?" This refusal of a Divine vocation pained the Sacred Heart of our Lord, and doubtless it pains that Sacred Heart to see the conduct of so many rich parents who encourage their children, not to accept, but to refuse like vocations. Herein then we have one reason for the dearth of these vocations, especially in a class of Catholics whom God has blessed with abundant means necessary to qualify their sons for the work of the sacred ministry.

But it is not to that class alone that the grace of priestly vocations is offered. Laborers to gather in the harvest of souls, "dispensers of the mysteries of God," are taken from every class. Most, indeed, of those directly chosen by Our Lord were from the humbler walks of life. St. Paul may allude to the same fact, when in his first Epistle to the Cor. he writes, "For you see your vocation, Brethren, that these are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, but the foolish things of the world God hath chosen, that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, and the things that are not, that He might bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in his light." 1 Ch. 25, 29 W. In our day, so it seems to have been from the beginning of the Church, the largest number of vocations comes from those not gifted with worldly wealth and power and position; not that the grace of vocation is not granted to those in the higher walks of society, but unfortunately for the worldly atmosphere, in which that class of Catholics spend their lives, tends to suppress and extinguish that grace and the germs of many a true vocation. But whilst the humbler homes, free from the allurements of worldly ambitions and filled with the spirit of real Catholic piety and practices, is more favorable to the development of the grace of a divine vocation, the good father of such a household very often finds himself unable to give his pious son the advantage of such an education as the Sacred Priesthood imperatively demands. There are many indeed, willing to make every sacrifice to fit their sons for so noble a calling, and deem themselves happy parents when they see their sons ministering at God's Holy Altar. But unquestionably there are young men, with admirable qualities of mind and heart, with a strong conviction of their vocation, whose parents lack the means of giving to them the necessary ecclesiastical education. And this, Brethren, is another reason for the smallness of the number who labor in the vineyard of the Lord. Most every priest, zealous for the glory of God and for the spread of Christ's Holy Church, has known young men of this class—young men and boys of exemplary habits, of pronounced piety, of pure intentions, anxious to devote themselves to the salvation of souls, but unable of themselves or through their parents to pay their way through the long course of college and seminary training. This training we know is indispensable. Our Lord did not ordain His Apostles for the Sacred Ministry until after years of diligent training. Besides the lessons of the highest virtue, He taught them by word and example. He stored their minds with the solid principles of truth which they were to be commissioned to teach to the whole world. And if He now calls to that same Sacred Ministry many who would gladly respond to His calls and who would gather in a large harvest of souls, should we not consider it a happiness, a glory to help in adding to the laborers for the harvest? How? First by prayer—by daily earnest prayer that "God send laborers into His harvest?" But also by giving liberally for the support of this Theological Seminary and the college here lately inaugurated for the preparation of young men for the seminary.

This latter institution has been found a necessity for the training of aspirants to the Holy Priesthood. It is now only in its infancy. We pray that the time is not far distant when it will be possible to procure a separate building for a preparatory ecclesiastical college. This with the seminary already in so flourishing a condition, will enable us to have under our immediate supervision all the candidates for the Holy Priesthood in this diocese. Being thus guarded and trained from earliest boyhood, the candidates, who successfully pass through this curriculum of studies and discipline will be the better fitted for our home mission.

May we not expect from all interested in the welfare of souls, a generous support of our effort in the cause of ecclesiastical education? When the importance of the work is brought home to those who have been blessed with a goodly share of this world's riches, will they not contribute generously to its success? They cannot select a more worthy object of their benevolence. They should regard it as an inestimable privilege and honor, not as an onerous duty, to co-operate so directly in the mission of the Church and her ministers. And whilst aiding in the work of aiding so many other souls, they derive untold spiritual blessings for themselves from the Holy Masses said and the Holy Sacraments administered by the priests whom they have helped to carry out their vocation to the Church. In fact, those who found burses in ecclesiastical seminaries, may attach a condition that every priest educated by the proceeds of that bursary, say a certain number of Masses for the donors, whether living or dead. How few of the wealthy Catholics of this diocese have diverted to this most laudable end, any portion of the wealth of which Almighty God has made them the administrators? It may be that the matter has never been brought home to them in any tangible, practical manner. A donation or bequest of five thousand dollars will be sufficient, when judiciously invested, to support a student in our seminary for all time. If thirty or forty such sums were donated, the Seminarians studying for this diocese could be supported if not entirely, almost entirely, by the interest on the investment. Then the annual assessment levied on each parish could pass to the building up and the maintaining of the preparatory college. Is the hope that forty or fifty Catholics of means may be found to establish the desired burses in this Seminary, vain and visionary? Surely the scheme proposed is altogether practicable among the many who are able, shall it be said that there are not thirty or forty who are willing to make it a reality? Some who have the means and the good will to found a bursary or perpetual scholarship, may say that they can realize more than six per cent on the five thousand dollars given to the Seminary. In that case, they might insert in their last will a clause bequeathing this amount to "The St. Louis Roman Catholic Theological Seminary," which is the legal name of the corporation controlling funds collected for the education of our Seminarians, and agree to pay the interest annually during their life time, with a sufficient endowment of the Seminary proper, we would soon have our preparatory college on a substantial foundation. With the two institutions flourishing the Archdiocese of St. Louis would soon take the rank to which its Catholic population and resources justly entitle it, as among the best equipped dioceses in our country for the training of its ecclesiastical students. Include this intention in your prayers to God, "That He send laborers into the Harvest."

LORD HALIFAX

THE GREAT ANGLICAN LEADER WILL EMBRACE CATHOLICITY.

The Means God Employs to Bring Men Into His Church—A Leaf From a Missionary Note Book—A Remarkable Cover.

It is reported on seemingly good authority that Lord Halifax, who made himself quite famous a few years ago in his efforts to bring the Anglican Church into union with the Catholic Church, is about to give in his submission to the Holy See.

It was he who opened the question of Anglican orders. Some French theologians considered that the validity of the orders in the English Church was a matter for discussion. Lord Halifax took the question up with a great deal of energy and event went so far as to outline a basis of union. The matter excited a great deal of interest at the time, and brought the claims of the Catholic Church prominently before the religious minds of England. The Holy See appointed a commission of learned theologians to consider the question of the validity of Anglican orders. The result of it all was an encyclical letter from the Holy Father decided that they were invalid and forever closing the question. This decision has been a most powerful means of bringing many back into the fold.

In speaking of the means God employs to bring men into His Church a priest tells the following story which illustrates one of the ways whereby men are led to the truth.

In a certain small town lived a young man, the son of an Episcopalian parent. In his childhood he was taught, of course, his parents' form of belief by his mother, but he learned more than she ever knew, for, by chance, an Irish girl and a devout Catholic was employed as his nurse. The nurse was accustomed to take the little boy to Mass on Sundays, and whenever he asked questions she would answer and explain the rite to him. The girl likewise used to hang a picture of the Blessed Virgin hanging on the nursery wall. Concerning this, too, the boy would question her, and she told him all about the good Mother and her love for all children. In time the boy grew up. He never had shown any very strong religious feeling, and, gradually, he drifted away from the Episcopalian belief, becoming one of that class of people who hold "that one religion is as good as another, provided a man is honest and pays his debts."

The young man found employment as a reporter in a newspaper office, there, of course, he met with all sorts of people and was sent to all sorts of places. On one occasion he was assigned to go to a Catholic church to report a funeral. He had not been inside a church of any kind for years—nor inside of a Catholic church since his childhood. It was strange, yet how curiously familiar, how strangely natural, as the chanting of the priest and, as his eyes looked about the building, he recognized a picture similar to the one which had once hung on his nursery walls. With that there returned to him a rush of memories of the old days—the days of youth, of innocence—but days which were associated with the Catholic Church.

He finished his work and went forth supposing that the impression would wear away and leave him as he had been before. But no, the thoughts, the memories of the past clung to him. He began to feel a sorrow for and a shame of sin; he began to feel a warming of heart toward God—toward that which was good. He wanted to do right; he wanted to begin once again, but how? Where? Then there flashed into his mind the thought that it must be in the Catholic Church, for that Church really, in his mind, was associated with all he could remember of goodness. So he went to call on a priest. With him the young man had a long talk. The priest explained the elements of the faith and the young man began to feel an interest that he never had known before. This conversation led to others, and, finally, the young man asked for baptism. After a course of instruction he received the Sacraments with most edifying piety. He showed himself a pious, practical Catholic while continuing his ordinary work. But God was not done with him yet. Once more God's voice spoke within and this time suggested the priesthood. The young man hesitated, doubted, delayed. He talked again—many times—with his former friend, who encouraged him in his aspirations, and finally the young man applied to his Bishop and was sent to a seminary to begin his study for holy orders. This story, simple enough and common enough in the experience of missionaries, shows what a wonderful influence grown people have on children. The young Irish nurse did not formally instruct the boy; she but answered his questions; she but planted seed which hereafter under the sunshine of God's grace was to bloom into the beautiful flower of conversion.

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NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD THE FOUR-TRACK TRUNK LINE

Trains leave from and arrive at Central Avenue Station, Rochester as follows: EAST BY MAIN LINE. A. M.—1:00, 2:15, 3:45, 5:15, 6:45, 8:15, 9:45, 11:15. P. M.—1:30, 3:00, 4:30, 6:00, 7:30, 9:00, 10:30, 12:00.

WEST BY FALLS ROAD. A. M.—7:15, 8:45, 10:15, 11:45. P. M.—1:15, 2:45, 4:15, 5:45, 7:15, 8:45, 10:15, 11:45.

CHARTER AND ONTARIO BRANCH. Leave Rochester Daily. A. M.—12:15, 1:30, P. M.—1:30, 2:45.

R. W. & O. DIVISION. Trains arrive and depart from State street station: East Bound—A. M.—7:00, 8:30, P. M.—3:00, 4:30.

WEST-SHORE RAILROAD IN EFFECT NOVEMBER 15, 1904. All trains and depart from N. Y. C. & N. H. R. R. Station for Syracuse, Utica, Albany, Boston, New York, Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, and all points east, west, north and south, as follows:

LEAVE GOING EAST. 6:05 A. M.—Continental Limited. 6:10 A. M.—Local Express. 6:15 A. M.—New York Express. 6:30 P. M.—Newark Local. 8:05 P. M.—National Express. 9:15 P. M.—Atlantic Express.

LEAVE GOING WEST. 12:07 A. M.—Continental Limited. 4:35 A. M.—St. Louis and Chicago Limited. 10:05 A. M.—National Express. 7:15 A. M.—Buffalo Local. 10:15 A. M.—Pacific Express. 4:45 P. M.—Buffalo Local.

TRAINS ARRIVE. From the East. A. M.—1:00, 2:15, 3:45, 5:15, 6:45, 8:15, 9:45, 11:15. P. M.—1:30, 3:00, 4:30, 6:00, 7:30, 9:00, 10:30, 12:00.

Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh. Trains leave West Ave. station as follows: 7:45 A. M. Week Days, Pittsburgh Vestibule Express, for Lakay, Warsaw, Perry, Hornellsville, Salamanca, Bradford, Butler and Pittsburgh. Has cafe car and elegant day coaches. Connects at Salamanca for Jamestown, Cambridge Springs, Cincinnati, Chicago and points west.

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ERIE PICTURESQUE TRUNK LINE OF AMERICA. See route from Buffalo to New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and all points east, south and west.

WESTERN NY. Sylvania Railway. Trains leave West Ave. station as follows: 7:45 A. M. Week Days, Pittsburgh Vestibule Express, for Lakay, Warsaw, Perry, Hornellsville, Salamanca, Bradford, Butler and Pittsburgh.

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