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Happy New Year to all.
 1903.

The year just past has been an eventful one in many ways.

It brought to an end the great pontificate of the great Pope Leo XIII. True, he had lived beyond the allotted span but his indomitable will had conquered physical frailty and none would have been surprised had he lived beyond the centennial mark. But his work here was finished and God called him to Himself. In his stead He has placed Pius X in the vigor of manhood, clear headed, demeratic, sagacious and pious. The passing of Leo and the advent of Pius without disturbing the onward march of Catholicity, is a visible proof that God is with His church.

During the twelve months just ended the world has witnessed the peaceful solution of a troublesome international complication—the Alaskan boundary muddle—and the substitution of arbitration for armed force in the settlement of such difficulties has received a mighty impetus.

On the other hand at least outward appearances indicate that the United States has drifted from ancient moorings during 1903. The impetuous, strenuous personality which is at the head of our government is so interested in the construction of an interoceanic canal across the isthmus of Panama that conservative Americans fear he has acted with uncommendable haste in recognizing one of those mushroom republics which spring up overnight in Central America. The presence in New York and Washington of persons financially interested in the success of the new republic of Panama and the almost suspicious haste with which they were welcomed by members of the American national administration give a sinister aspect to the whole affair. Those of us who have not been hypnotized by the glamour of "expansion" and "world-wide power" devoutly hope that this mad craze that America was destined by the Creator to civilize the globe with its inevitable corollary of poking our nose into the business of every nation is fast nearing its end. If it continues dark days may be in store for the republic.

If the conservative citizens voice their protests vigorously all this may be changed. If they fold their hands gupinely and agree to let things drift, the radicals will be seated in the saddle more firmly than ever.

Good Resolutions.

Ere another issue of the Journal reaches our readers 1903 will be numbered with the past and 1904 will be upon us.

How quickly the days roll by! "Today of past regret and future fears" is gone before we know it and we make plans for the to-morrow which never comes.

Twelve months ago how many of us made resolutions that we would do this, that we would not do that. How long did we remember the vows we then took? Have we forswn the card table? Have we shunned the wine when it was red? Have we curbed the angry tongue? Have we silled our ears to riqgue stories? Have we been more devoted to her whom we promised to cherish until death parts? Have we been better fathers, better mothers? Have we been better Catholics?

Undoubtedly we meant to keep our good resolutions made January 1, 1903. But did we?

Undoubtedly we will make more good resolutions on January 1, 1904. Will we keep them?

After all "our best resolutions are frail" when opposed to our predominant inclinations.

What Difference Does it Make?

"I am surprised that such an intelligent man as you are can profess to believe in the Catholic religion."

This is not an unfamiliar or an uncommon salutation from a non-Catholic to a Catholic.

"What is there in the Catholic religion that surprises you?" may be the retort of the Catholic.

"Why I do not see how you can believe that the priest forgives sin" may be the non-Catholic's rejoinder.

"Not so fast. Catholics do not believe that the priest forgives sin. It is God who forgives. The priest merely acts as His earthly representative. A parallel case may be cited when the warden opens the prison door and frees a convict who has been pardoned. Laterally speaking the warden frees the prisoner but he would have had no right to unlock the doors had it not been for the pardon signed by the governor."

"I must say that I do not quite agree with your reasoning but let that pass" comments the non-Catholic; "but it cannot be possible that you subscribe to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception?"

"Well and why not pray? Indeed it is not an insult to Jesus Christ to believe or think otherwise." How can we believe in the immaculate conception of our Lord and at the same time believe that His mother was conceived in sin? If she was tainted with original sin how could her Blessed Son escape that taint even though He were conceived without sin? But He, being God, could not be so tainted. A miracle you say. If God the Father willed a miracle in the conception of His Son why could He not do so in the case of His mother? Indeed, there is far more reason to believe that He did than that He did not. After all why need it worry you? If Catholics make mistakes they suffer, not you. We do not rack our brains as to what non-Catholics believe or do not believe. Catholic preachers find other things to preach about than the vagaries of Protestants. We are too much concerned about saving our souls than what non-Catholics think about us.

The three last sentences are the nub of the discussion. Why do non-Catholics rack their brains over that which is to them a matter of surprise what Catholics believe as they do. To these persons may be commended this passage in Cardinal Newman's "Apologia."

"I have no difficulty in receiving the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and that, because it so harmonizes with that circle of recognized dogmatic truths, into which it has been recently received;—but if I have no difficulty, why may not another have no difficulty also? Why may not a hundred? A thousand? Now I am sure that Catholics in general have not any intellectual difficulty at all on the subject of the Immaculate Conception; and that there is no reason why they should. Priests have no difficulty. You tell me that they ought to have a difficulty—but they have not. Be large minded enough to believe that men may reason and feel very differently from yourselves, how is it that men, when left to themselves fall into such various forms of religion, except that there are various types of mind, among them, very distinct from each other? From my testimony then about myself, if you believe it, judge of others also who are Catholics; we do not find the difficulties which you do in the doctrines which we hold; we have no intellectual difficulty in that doctrine in particular, which you call a novelty of this day. We priests need not be hypocrites, though we be called upon to believe in the Immaculate Conception. To that large class of minds who believe in Christianity after our manner in the particular temper, spirit and light, (whatever word is used) in which Catholics believe—there is no burden at all in holding that the Blessed Virgin was conceived without original sin; indeed, it is a simple fact to say that Catholics have not come to believe it because it is defined, but that it was defined because they believed it."

Cause For Scandal.

In another column we have expressed our surprise that non-Catholics worry themselves because Catholics believe some of the things they do.

With much greater surprise we have read several letters which appeared recently in the New York "Sun" which purported to have been written by Catholic priests. We say "purported" advisedly because these letters bear every external evidence that their authors are bitter enemies both to Catholic faith and to the Catholic church. When men write as though the education of the intellect is the one desirable end of life; when they argue practically that Catholics should sacrifice much of what they have been taught from childhood to believe in order to win the approval of their non-Catholic neighbors, is it not stating the case mildly to say that they are giving aid and comfort to our non-Catholic opponents; that they are their willing accessories?

When a writer who wishes readers of a secular paper to believe him a Catholic priest puts forth the argument that if miracle shrines were abolished; if the novenas of nine Fridays were dropped and that if Catholics were to be told that they need not construe literally certain passages of Holy Writ in what appreciable degree does he differ from the atheistic Protestant who claims the right to believe whatever in the denomination, all tenets is not repugnant to his sensitive soul and to reject whatever offends his delicate olfactory?

These writers should remember that the Catholic church was not instituted to meet the tastes of individuals. If they feel as they write they can be suited very easily in any one of the hundred and more of the non-Catholic cults. They should also remember that all Catholics have not been endowed with the "higher intellect" and that not all those so endowed have the necessary means to pursue the "higher education." They should also recall that in these days of multiplied printing presses and cheap literature it is not an easy matter for the rank and file to select just what to study and hence it is absolutely necessary that the great majority need the "anient landmarks" to keep them in line. Probably, their fathers and mothers made the "Nine Fridays" and their standing in society was not impaired. Maybe their parents made a pilgrimage to some "shrine" and their intellect and capacity for "higher education" was not diminished. Then why should these gentlemen try to deprive their descendants of what may tend to keep them closer to their church?

We are loth to believe that the writers of the articles referred to are Catholic priests. If they are they should have the grace to sign their names to their contributions so that the entire priesthood of the New York archdiocese will not rest under the imputation of their authorship. If they are members of the priesthood, one cannot help thinking that they are in need of the benefits of "Nine Fridays" that they do not stray outside the fold entirely. Can they wonder if we who look up to the priesthood for guidance are scandalized by their thinly veiled criticism of those who are entrusted with the management of the church? Will they be angry with us for suggesting these words by Thomas A. Kempis.

"Faith is required at thy hands and a sincere life, not loftiness of intellect."

As might be expected the cock and bull story sent out by the penny liners about the "discovery" of fabulous "hidden treasures" in the Vatican turns out to be a fabrication of the first water. It is surprising what trash is absorbed by the press under the guise of "special cable dispatches from Rome." And then think of the telegraph toll!

Keep your thinking cap on else you will be sure to write "1903."

What new country will the United States take under its wing in 1904.

Now that the friars in the Phillipines are unavailable as an issue what next will the A. P.-apes seize upon for anti-Catholic campaign material?

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