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Not Unusual.

Why is it that the Protestants have so much difficulty in securing audiences for their religious services, despite flaunting advertisements of eloquent speakers, bizarre subjects, fine musical programmes and all the other accessories of the modern, high-class theater?

We hear it bewailed on all sides that non-Catholic churches are not more than half-filled at Sunday services while week-day and week-night services are not attended by a corporal's guard.

On the other hand, Catholic churches are filled to capacity, not only on Sundays but on week-days as well. Take the Holy Week services, just over. The Catholic churches of Rochester were crowded not only on Easter Sunday but on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday at the daytime services. And the congregations were not made up of women and children only. They numbered men by the hundreds.

All through Lent, the Catholic churches were filled every Wednesday and Friday night. And at the early morning masses there was a large attendance. In what Protestant church of Rochester will you see men praying for a minute or so, if no more, on their way to work or on their way home after the day's work?

Where in a non-Catholic church will you find such large attendance upon meetings of such societies as the Holy Name Society?

And withal, the Church is not satisfied. Just listen to Rev. J.M. Prendergast, S.J., as he talks to a recent meeting of the Catholic Young Men's Association in Boston.

"These great assemblages of men to reverence God are seldom seen outside the Catholic church and they should be of more frequent occurrence, for to God we owe all we have and to Him we should yield homage, love and duty. Man of the world is not made for man himself, nor can he find happiness in himself or in the world and its riches.

"Profit! Ours is a day when all conversation and all thought, it seems, are upon that word profit. The conversations we hear upon the street cars, the sidewalks and even in the homes all deal with the subject of profit. What is there in it for me? That is the universal question. Then here is a thought for all to ponder over, a thought that deals with profit and with loss. What profit can be greater than gaining eternal happiness, and what loss greater than the loss of ourselves for eternity?

We find it hard to believe that there is not a little niche reserved for us up in heaven. Somehow it always seems that while some one else may be lost, heaven is getting along very well without us. But remember that to reach heaven we must earn the happiness it brings. We cannot gain heaven and earth. It is either the world or the soul."

Odious

Protestant clergymen, and individual Protestants who are so zealously commending the action of the French atheists in hounding the Catholics in France probably are not aware that their own colleagues are apt to feel the iron hand of the infidels in France.

Here in the United States, church property is exempt from taxation. We believe that certain bigots would deprive the Catholics of this privilege but the Constitution forbids unless the Protestant church property is also taxed. In this state, at least, residences of clergymen are also exempted from taxation where they are parochial property.

Over in France, where the priests fancied they had title to their homes, the gendarmes are kept busy evicting clerics from their homes as the new law forbids the municipality to even grant the priests—or Protestant clergymen for that matter—any exemption whatever. So the clerics are driven out into the world, penniless and homeless in their old age!

Just read the following, from the Paris correspondent of the "Irish Catholic":—

"The other day an exceptionally odious expulsion was effected at Villards-sur-Thones, a little village in the Haute-Savoie. The village parish priest and his curate, who are beloved by all their flock, had with the consent of all, remained in their presbytery. They were the more justified in doing so because there was not a single house in the hamlet in which they could find shelter. There was not even a cottage to let. Nevertheless a strong force of gendarmes was sent to turn them out of the presbytery in which the old priest had lived nearly all his life. No fewer than forty gendarmes, commanded by a captain named Bretan, commenced the siege of the house and called on the priest to surrender.

"All the inhabitants of the village, who had been warned of the arrival of the armed force by the ringing of the church bell, assembled to protest against the outrage. Even the women and children were so carried away by their indignation that they attacked the representatives of authority, though they should have known by the experience in other parishes their resistances would be useless. The first blows were exchanged, resulted in the arrest of five persons.

"The 'Revue du diocese d'Anancy,' which has just come to hand, gives further information concerning the deplorable affair. A large number of the inhabitants were more or less seriously wounded. It was with the consent of the Municipal Council that the priest had remained in the presbytery, and the expulsion of the worthy abbe from his home was effected by the order of the prefect, in spite of the protest of the Mayor and of all the other Municipal Councillors.

"The 'Croix' affirms that the expulsion was not only odious, but absolutely illegal, as it had been established by precedent that if the municipality has by law the right to demand of the prefectorial authority to expel the priest from the presbytery, which is the property of the commune, the prefectorial authority has not the right to expel the parish priest against the legally expressed desire of the municipality that he should be left in peaceable possession of his home. I quote this opinion of the 'Croix' but I regret to say that I fear it is erroneous. The iniquitous law on the subject seems to me to empower the prefect to expel the priest if, in his opinion, the priest does not agree to pay the commune what that official may consider to be the fair rental value of the building. The municipality is forbidden by law from giving any sort of subsidy to the priest,

even in the form of a house free of rent, or at a nominal rent.

Politics.

A much-mooted question nowadays is whether the Catholic priest should take an active part in civic matters. It is considered perfectly permissible for a Protestant clergyman to be active in politics, in fact many of them preach but few sermons which are not of a political nature, at least of an economic or sociological character. Nothing is said in objection, rather the press and public think such action commendable.

But if the Catholic priest takes any active part in public matters he is apt to be criticised if he happens to oppose the popular idea, no matter if that popular idea happens to be unjust in morals and unwise in practical life.

Not infrequently, the Catholic who applauds the activity of the Protestant clergyman in public life bewails the interference of his parish priest who chances to take a very minor part in the same public movement.

It is to this class we commend the following thoughts contributed to the "Irish Ecclesiastical Review" by Rev. J. Kelleher, S.J.: "Clerical influence as such ought not to be one whit more objectionable than any other. The priest ought surely to be just as free to speak and act as the doctor or the lawyer. In influencing others, he is doing only what every member of the community is trying to do, and what every one is bound to try to do to a certain extent. He may, indeed, be able to do this more effectively than others, but if he is, it is because the people generally have greater confidence in his judgment and sincerity. Some people may think that confidence misplaced; if they do, they are perfectly justified in trying to destroy it. But while it exists they cannot complain of the people for being influenced by it, or of the priest for availing of it, as long as he is convinced that it is not misplaced.

"A priest, it is true, may be guilty of undue influence; perhaps from the position he holds he is more exposed to it than most others. That however, is a matter between each priest and the public; and if a priest is detected using undue influence, he should be dealt with just as anybody else would be if convicted of a similar offense. But clerics should never be deterred from taking their legitimate place in public life by any bogus alarms about clerical dictation or unique interference, that are so assiduously circulated by certain politicians who would find it to their advantage to have clerical influence diminished or destroyed."

Upon this the "Ave Maria" comments:

"The foregoing remarks are as applicable on this side as on the other side of the Atlantic. So far as the question of right is concerned, there can be no question about a priest's having as perfect a right as any other member of the body politic to occupy himself actively in civic affairs. As to the extent to which he may with propriety and expediency so occupy himself, that is a question for his own consideration and that of his Bishop; it is not a matter to be settled by the 'ipse dixit' of any party 'boss' or politician for revenue.

"In the meantime, be his personal participation in practical politics notable or inconsiderable it is not merely the priest's right, but his duty, to instruct his people as to the importance of their taking an active and intelligent interest in all questions of government, municipal, State or Federal. As constituent members of the body politic, his parishioners cannot with impunity shirk their share of the responsibility for the evils resulting from defective laws or the maladministration of

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selected officials. They are, beyond all question, bound in conscience to secure, to the extent of their ability, the best possible legislation and the most honest possible administration of public affairs. It is one of the duties of their state in life, and it is largely because the clergy of some European countries for decades failed to emphasize the sinfulness of neglecting that duty that millions of Catholics now lie helpless under the control of a handful of agnostic and Masonic political magnates. In a democratic country no good Catholic can be indifferent to matters political."

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