

The Catholic Courier And Journal

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THE LEPERS OF COLOMBIA

Most of us have heard of Father Damien, priest of the leper colony at Molokai, and of Brother Dutton, convert, Civil War veteran and society favorite, who went to Molokai and gave more than half a century of his life to caring for the lepers.

The Salerian Fathers have charge of three colonies in Colombia—at Agua de Dios, at Contratacion and at Cano de Loro. At the first named colony there are five priests, two lay brothers, one cleric, a group of Dominican Sisters of the Presentation of Jesus, and a congregation of real leper Sisters, one of the strangest in the world.

At Contratacion there are five priests, five lay brothers, one cleric, twenty-three Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, and a number of daughters of lepers. This, too, is a very large colony.

The Salerians have worked for forty years among the lepers of Colombia. Two of their priests have died lepers, Fathers Santinelli and Berra, the latter a native Colombian. Four more of their priests are lepers: Father Henry Pirali, an Italian, died fifty-four years, and not an extreme case; Father A. Guenoa, a Colombian, aged fifty-three years, and now in a suitable condition; an Italian priest at Cano de Loro, aged fifty-seven, now completely cured; and Father Henry Knoop, a German, aged forty-seven, badly diseased.

Two Daughters of Mary have died of the disease, Sister Theresa Rota and Sister Bonifacio Barbero. A third Daughter of Mary, Sister Modeste Ravassa, is now in the last stages of the disease, and has offered her body to the medical profession for experimentation in curing the disease. Many priests and Sisters have been in the colonies twenty or more years.

The colony at Agua de Dios is the oldest of the three, and is typical of all. It is a vast plain, situated with many hundreds of tiny white houses nestling in the shadow of great trees, always green, and with a series of low hills around the village. Each leper family has its own home. The young men and women marry, each knowing full well the dreaded life that is ahead, but each longing for companionship, comradeship and love in the inevitable sorrow and suffering. The temperature, very hot, is scorching to leprosy.

Church, schools, festive oratorios for leper children, with gymnasiums and bands; trade schools, printing presses, and a world of love and devotion from priests, brothers, Sisters—these are some of the blessings of the colonies. The government takes splendid medical care of all sufferers and provides them with homes and necessities of life. The colonies are little havens compared to what Father Damien found when he went to Molokai. But back of all, and like a priceless jeweled crown upon all, are the love, the devotion, the sacrifice of the religious who go voluntarily into the colonies to care for and comfort the unfortunate sufferers beset by the horrors of leprosy.

The Blind Man Flies

I am blind; I have never seen Sun, gold, nor silver-moon Nor the fairy faces of flowers Nor the radiant moon.

They speak of the dawn and the dusk And the smile of a child As of God, undefiled.

But I learn from the air to-day— On a bird's wings I flew— All of the God I knew.

I felt the blue mantle of space, And kissed the cloud's white hem; I heard the stars' majestic choir, And sang my praise with them.

Now joy is mine through my long night— I do not feel the rod; For I have danced the streets of Heaven, And touched the face of God. —Catherine Hicks.

MEXICO UNDER OBSERVATION

Under the above title the Rev. James A. Magner of Chicago has an interesting article in the current issue of The Commonwealth. Father Magner recently returned from a lengthy trip through Mexico. He studied the people, their habits, customs and their Catholicity. He finds two extremes of viewpoint to the Mexican question—one a conviction of the iniquity of the revolutionary regime; the other a confident hope that the regime will be successful. Says Father Magner:

"Our sympathies are almost necessarily lodged with movements which act in accordance with our particular philosophy of life. A non-Catholic in Mexico will probably sympathize with the anti-Church program of the government, even though he is forced by evidence to see iniquity in its gestures. A Catholic will probably denounce this program wholeheartedly, even though he may be compelled to admit that there is some justification for it. An American capitalist, unacquainted with the traditional Spanish concept of property which relates all ownership to government tenure, will appeal to Congress every time his holdings in Mexico are manipulated by the Mexican government. The average American, incapable of conceiving a feudal system of agricultural development, and blind to the same limitations when they occur in American industrialism, will grit his teeth with indignation at the spectacle of peasantry and peonage.

Ministers of every denomination are forbidden to function in Mexico, Father Magner says, except under certain conditions. Yet he finds many Protestant ministers there, functioning as "social workers," and the Y. M. C. A., a distinctly non-Catholic organization, functioning along the same lines. The primary purpose of the Catholic Church is not social uplift, he says; its standard of life is based on spiritual values, and not scientific advancement or social comfort. Then he asks: "Can it be, however, that a true code of spiritual values can afford to ignore the advance of science or not involve a program of social improvement?"

There is a growing spirit in Mexico, Father Magner finds, to repudiate the cultural influences of Spain, and to promote the native cultural influences. It is quite too much to suppose, he says, that all the leaders in a modern Mexican state, even those who present a Catholic front, would subscribe to the Catholic faith or the Catholic policy. Hardly more than one-fifth of Mexico may be called "actively Catholic," he says, "in the sense of making a reasoned and practical profession of faith." Which undoubtedly accounts for the ease with which bigoted rulers, like Tejada of Vera Cruz, are able to crush the work of the Church in a great state that is supposedly one hundred per cent Catholic. The masses, says Father Magner, suffering from a faulty economic system, can easily be whipped into a revolution, and made to feel that the Church has been the cause of their oppression.

In concluding his article Father Magner writes:

"It is a grave mistake to conclude, as many persons do, that the Church has failed in its social mission for Mexico and must give way to a secular philosophy of life. The truth is that the Church has not failed, but that its mission is far from complete. If there were failure on the Church's part, it would be a failure to recognize this fact. It is impossible to exterminate completely any group from such difficulties as Mexico is laboring under. Besides, exonerated is not always the path to progress. Progress will be made when the progressive elements join their energies to solve the problems of the country. If the woes of Mexico in the past can be traced in large part to a mutual distrust between secular and ecclesiastical elements, nothing short of a friendly adaptation of programs, a more sympathetic social outlook, and genuine co-operation between the two can make for the advancement of these children of God. The Catholic Church is not so conservative that it cannot meet the needs of the modern age, and the Mexican government is not so advanced that it can afford to reject the religious faith of its people. In Christ, through the ministrations of the Catholic Church."

Poor in the Midst of Plenty

Blind leaders today are looking to Russia as to a solution of the economic ills of the world. Many are obsessed with the fact that our own economic structure seems to be tumbling down. And yet what Russia is aiming to attain we have already attained. This nation is not only deluged with production but over-production. Millions are poor in the midst of plenty. The Soviet claims that when the goal of Russian plenty is reached all will share in it. But—Will a hard material, godless civilization ever understand equality in the only sense which it can be understood—man's relation to his Creator? As well expect this as to expect tears from a statue of bronze. The Russian lesson is there—but it is there not for the state as much as for those who in capitalistic countries control the state.—The Tidings, Los Angeles, Cal.

HANDS ACROSS THE SEA

In England, where Catholic laymen seem to be conducting Catholic Action with so much more spirit and success than their American brethren, a society was formed some years ago with the intention of conducting a public defense and explanation of Catholic doctrines. It still exists and operates, with the added impetus of years of experience. It is known as the Catholic Evidence Guild. Its members place themselves under the guidance of experienced and zealous men, and submit themselves to intensive training in Christian doctrine and in public speaking. After they are judged fit, they begin their open-air lecturing in London's famous Hyde Park, where a motley humanity crowds and pushes its way. Hyde Park has proven a harbor of refuge for stumpspeaking charlatans barking a hundred varieties of the false and ugly; but it has also given place to the dauntless and democratic orators of the Catholic Evidence Guild and gained them a hearing among thousands who would never otherwise come to know of the Truth. The successful work of these Guild members renders all the more probable the fulfillment of an American missionary's prophecy that the day will be not far off when American priests will make the street-corner one of their pulpits.

One of the most difficult steps in training for this Guild work is that which deals with the answering of questions and objections. A Guild speaker must be trained how to meet any interruption; he must keep down an unbecoming controversial temper; he must not allow himself to lose his self-possession or his confidence, no matter how rude or untimely the interruption may be; he must be schooled in the lore of all the prejudices of his hearers. This is one of the most important elements of the Guild training. Nor do the Guild authorities consider time spent on it as wasted. They realize that such a drill prepares their speakers for a most important phase of Catholic defense—the answering of controversial questions. Half the effectiveness of the Guild workers with the London English public arises out of their readiness to meet all questions. Their rostrum is an open forum, and so thousands are willing to listen. Only a better dozen might be gathered to hear a one-sided discussion.

In no period since the Protestant Reformation have non-Catholic sectarians shown such a widespread interest in Catholic doctrines as at present. Although our Catholic heart points to the grace of God as the leading cause of such interest, we will not go astray if we say that God has used also such natural causes as the post-war disillusionment of the world, as well as the economic decline, to prod the minds and hearts of men into setting their souls in order. We on the Catholic side have a duty to meet and satisfy such non-Catholic interest. To sit idly back in armchair comfort and not "give a hand" has been for too long the narrow spirit of too many Catholics. Now, more than ever, will it be grievously wrong to omit action, when the Holy Father is clamoring again and again for Catholic Action. Now, more than ever, may we hang our heads in shame, if we refuse to begin what English Catholics have been doing for years in an effort to bring Catholic doctrine plainly and strongly before non-Catholic minds.

Conditions in America are perhaps not yet ripe for the institution of open-air pulpits occupied by Catholic laymen. But the times are more than ready for some opportunity to be placed in the way of American non-Catholics for the fulfillment of their desire for religious enquiry. A plan is under way in Rochester to meet that need. According to this plan—which

is still in process of development—a room in the Columbus Civic Centre will be reserved for one evening each week as a meeting-place for anyone, Catholic or non-Catholic, who desires a presentation of the Catholic faith in plain, straightforward style. Members of the class are under no obligation or constraint. They are free to enter or leave as they please. The discussions will be conducted by the Rev. Benedict A. Ehrmann, whose handling of Protestant enquiry over the radio reacted favorably upon non-Catholics themselves. The meetings of this class of religious enquiry shall be devoted to the discussion of some phase of Catholic doctrine, and also to the answering of questions. In fact the Question Box will be as prominent a feature of the discussion. The plan and all its details will be publicly announced at a later date. It is hoped that the project can be launched early in the new year.

By this means shall further progress be made in a neglected field of Catholic Action. The endeavor shall call forth the prayers and active interest of all Catholics. It shall be regarded by non-Catholics as a sincere advance towards the fulfillment of something which many of themselves have long desired. By such it shall be welcomed as an instrument for the elimination of misunderstanding and its dingy brood of bigotry and intolerance.

A TRUCE IN ARMS

In the recent encyclical of Pope Pius XI, calling for a resuscitation of Catholic charity, the Supreme Pontiff said the monumental preparations that are being made for war by numerous nations are responsible in great part for the poverty and depression in the world. He made a plea that these preparations be discontinued, and that the nations would come back to the principles and teachings of Christ.

The one-year armistice treaty, recently signed by fifty nations, including the United States, came like an answer to the plea of the Holy Father. These nations promise not to build or buy any land, sea, or air armaments for one year from November 1, 1931. They may, however, replace old equipment and complete any construction which has already been begun. The truce was proposed by the League of Nations as a good way to prepare for the coming World Disarmament Conference in February.

It's a good way also to prepare the world for better days. Wars are abominable things, destructive of every high ideal, every noble impulse, in the individual or the nation. A saturnalia of villainous falsehoods covered the world in the last war. They bore the seductive label of "Propaganda." They were fostered, promoted and disseminated by nations themselves, carried the vilest falsehoods against enemy nations and peoples, and left a morass of moral degradation behind them. Nothing Christian and little that was civilized was let stand in the way of victory by any nation. Add to this the horrible slaughter of human life, the maiming and starving of millions of people, the destruction of the work of centuries in fields of art, civilization and religion, and one gets but a brief glimpse into the horrors of war. The truce of arms, therefore, is rightly welcomed as a step towards peace, and it is hoped that other and better steps will be taken in the future.

Jack Dempsey's brother Joe has a chance to team it up in vaudeville now with President Hoover's brother-in-law. Joe was nabbed for bootlegging in Los Angeles the other day, and his arrest was a great shock to many law-abiding citizens who were waiting delivery of the twenty-four gallons of depression exterminator he had in his car.

WAYSIDE WHEAT

By the Managing Editor

Fore more than two thousand years Christianity has been trying to soften human hearts, and instill into them the charity and peace of Christ. Yet in Prague, Czechoslovakia, the other day a cordon of police fired a volley into a crowd of unemployed men and women who were organizing to march to the City Hall and demand assistance. Ten persons were killed and thirteen wounded seriously, including six women. The tragedy caused a great uproar among members of Parliament, some defending the acts of the police and others denouncing them as murderers. Thus, oftentimes, is the dignity of law upheld by human atoms who carry the guns.

In selecting the All-American football teams this Fall we would recommend the names of the following players to the Americanization committee of the Ku Klux guardians of America's sheets and pillow cases: Vavra, Abbe and Firstenberg, of N. Y.; Olatosky, Lucanis, and Kell, Carnegie Tech; Bablow and Dablow, North Dakota; Kohlhaase, Tennessee; Colucci, Zytell, Baiorinhos, Cavalieri, Holy Cross; Conroy, Huxcutt and Chruslawich, Boston College; Kossack, Martinez, Ferraro, Viviano, Cornell; Sokolis, Yablonski and Perina, Pennsylvania; Turrell, Holston, Kaschel, Bonovito, Zanaiani, Klumbright and Reznichak, Bucknell; Vivaldi, Stepanovich, Currius, Toscani, Loyell, St. Mary's; Mikaluk of Oregon; Nussnickel, Illinois; Krajcovic, Maryland; Tzell, Georgia Tech; Kopecek, Army; Opasik, Indiana; Kiezingar, Nebraska; Scherenscewsky, Harvard; Ceppi, Princeton.

A total of 61,628 liquor law violation cases went into the garbage can of Prohibition history thus far this year, according to a report made by Assistant Attorney General Youngquist, in charge of Prohibition at Washington. Dismissals amounted to 11.8 per cent, pleas of guilty to 79.7 per cent, and jury trials 8.5 per cent, pleas of guilty to 79.7 per cent, and jury trials 8.5 per cent. Some 18,538 cases are still pending. This vast number of arrests, growing higher year by year, smothering Federal courts all over the land, and leaving a flood of lawlessness behind, as well as of graft, corruption and murder, may be added up in two ways: One, as a noble experiment; the other, as a colossal calamity. Take your choice, but have it analyzed before you drink to the success of the venture.

CURRENT COMMENT

SHOCKINGLY UNFAIR

What this nation needs is not a good five-cent cigar and the tallest buildings and the best-paved roads, but an awakening to a sense of social justice that will counteract the incredibly one-sided division of its wealth.

Senator David I. Walsh, of Massachusetts, in a recent address, pointed out that "five hundred and four persons, according to recent treasury statistics, had, apart from their tax-exempt incomes, a net income, that is, clear profits, in 1929, of \$1,185,135,330. According to the Department of Agriculture, the farm price of the American wheat crop in 1930 was \$517,407,000 and the farm price of the cotton crop was \$674,044,000. Add these two figures together and we find that the two chief crops of the United States brought their growers almost precisely the same amount as the total income of those 504 Americans super-millionaires in the preceding year. That means that 504 Americans with their net profits in 1929 could have bought the 1930 wheat and cotton crops in this country of 3,000,000 square miles and 123,000,000 persons. Seek no further for the chief cause of distress either on the farm or in the cities. Such appalling concentration of wealth, such almost criminal disproportion of rewards, tells the major part of the story. Surely some political leadership has a responsibility to protect the many against the concentration of the wealth and the vast resources of the nation in the possession of the organized few."—Southern Messenger, San Antonio, Texas.

A SUBSIDY OF TAXPAYERS

There are 86,000 children in the parochial schools of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Rev. Dr. Paul E. Campbell, diocesan superintendent of schools, reports as the schools there opened for the fall term. Pittsburgh is one of over one hundred dioceses in the country with parochial schools.

There are over 2,250,000 pupils in the Catholic parochial schools of the country. Statistics reveal that the average cost of educating a child in the grammar schools is sixty cents a day. The Catholic schools of the country save the tax payers more than \$1,350,000 daily, therefore. The people of the nation are groaning under the burden of taxes. Do they appreciate the contribution the Catholics of the country are making to the cause of education out of their own pocket, while at the same time paying at least their proportion of the nation's public school education bill from which fifty per cent of them get no return?—The Bulletin, Atlanta, Ga.

When You Make Your Will

Always, in every Diocese, there are churches and institutions which have heavy financial burdens, and whose work is handicapped by these burdens. When you make your will, the best way in the world to help these needy ones is to insert a paragraph something like this in the will:

"I give and bequeath to the Rt. Rev. John Francis O'Hern, D.D., Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Rochester, N. Y., or his successor or successors in office, the sum of \$_____ to be used at his or their discretion for the work of the institutions of the Diocese."

If you are interested in some particular church, charity or institution a clause like this may be added: "I am interested particularly in _____ Bequests, large or small, are a great blessing to religion, and it is highly edifying to read of them in any will. No Catholic will should be without one or more such bequests."