

Sumum Cards

Mark Twain On the Chinese

By Rev. James M. Gillis, C.S.P.

Being in San Francisco—an old stamping ground of mine—and living as I always do on the edge of Chinatown, I have been renewing and reinforcing my personal impressions of the Chinese-Americans which I first formed 30 years ago.

Here at Old St. Mary's, a very popular Church, we do not devote ourselves exclusively to the Chinese, although they are our nearest neighbors, but we have a Chinese School day and night with some 50 pupils. We have special Masses for the Chinese in the School Chapel, though of course they are also heartily welcomed to the big church. We conduct local gatherings for them and in a dozen ways minister to their spiritual wants. All who deal with them find the work pleasant, the apostolate productive and the people almost universally lovable.

Naturally, therefore, I was interested to read anew what Mark Twain, a San Franciscan by adoption, wrote of the Nevada and California Chinese in 1871. You may find it in the second volume of Roughing It, chapter xiii. It is curiously satisfying to note how closely his view of 70 years ago coincides with ours of today. Here and there he has a line that is now outdated, as for example that "the chief employment of Chinamen in Iowa is to wash clothing." They do still have laundries in San Francisco as elsewhere, but they are also merchants, lawyers, doctors; the young women like our own are going in for secretarial jobs and stenography; the young men for insurance and general mercantile business. Most conspicuously they are storekeepers and their shops are, as every one knows, among the most attractive in the world. In some of them you may find beautiful and exquisite fabrics and an exotically interesting selection of Oriental merchandise.

But with that exception in regard to the occupation of the Chinese, what Mark Twain said of them so long ago remains substantially true.

"They are a harmless race when white men either let them alone or treat them no worse than dogs; in fact they are almost entirely harmless anyhow, for they seldom think of resenting the vilest insults or the cruellest injuries." Perhaps we should stop a moment to explain that here in San Francisco it is no longer the custom to bait the Chinese. The barbaric custom of insulting and injuring them has passed away. They are respected and admired and loved.

He continues: "They are quiet, peaceable, tractable, free from drunkenness and they are as industrious as the day is long. A disorderly Chinaman is rare and a lazy one does not exist. So long as a Chinaman has strength to use his hands he needs no support from anybody. All Chinamen can read, write and cipher with easy facility. . . . In California they rent little patches of ground and do a deal of gardening. They will raise surprising crops of vegetables on a sand pile. They waste nothing."

So this genial old adopted Californian goes on, for several pages more in what is an almost unqualified encomium of the Chinese people. It need only be added that Californians of today repeat with emphasis what Mark Twain has said.

One thing more, however, he does not mention. Perhaps it was not obvious in his day. The Chinese make splendid converts. They take to our Faith as it were naturally, and gladly. It seems no harder to bring them to Catholicism from paganism than to persuade white people to make the shorter journey from heresy or from nothingness to the true religion. Here in California and still more in China we have high hopes that the Chinese people will, when the war is over, become very largely if not predominantly Catholic. I remember the prophecy of Father James Anthony Walsh, co-founder of Maryknoll, that "China will be the Ireland of the future; that she will not only embrace the faith but will spread it over all Asia." Twenty years ago that prophecy may have seemed to some skeptics overly optimistic. But today the signs point to its fulfillment.

At any rate we are fortunate to have the Chinese with us in the war against Japan. They have done nobly. Who knows but that in the Divine Plan this most interesting and attractive people will receive, in the form of supernatural faith, the reward for what they have suffered sometimes from the white man and sometimes from their yellow neighbors over there?

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Five Years Ago--

—in the files of the CATHOLIC COURIER

From Mar. 12, 1937, Edition

In an historical indictment of Communism as the ruin of family and society, His Holiness, Pope Pius XI, issued an Encyclical "Divini Redemptoris," calling on the entire world in general and Catholics in particular to combat the Red doctrine with a sound program of justice.

The broad road of Ireland's spiritual influence stretches from land to land, covering the entire earth, the Rev. William F. Bergan, Chancellor of the Rochester diocese, declared in a St. Patrick's Day panegyric delivered at the Cathedral.

Site of the magnificent property some five miles outside of Las Vegas, New Mexico, was acquired by the Committee of U. S. Bishops to establish a seminary in the United States for training of Mexican youth for the Holy Priesthood.

Completing plans long under consideration, executives and officials of St. Alphonus Church, Auburn, met to form a permanent organization to carry on Catholic activities of the parish on a larger scale.

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know no way of judging of the future but by the past.—Patrick Henry.

EDITORIALS

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soil in which they and their forebears for centuries past have been registered as natives, have been deprived of their property, driven forth from their homes, forced to make themselves exiles from all they hold dear. No crime has been theirs, no just sentence has been passed on them: they are in America because they could find self-preservation only in fleeing from the murderous rapacity of a conscienceless dictator. Their women and children have in many cases come with them, to find a shelter, a temporary home in our country.

The American attitude toward them must be more than one of sympathy; it must be one of consideration, of charity, of justice. Many of them must seek a livelihood through exercise of their professions, their trades, their vocations. Reasonable consideration of the relatively small numbers in which they appear in any community, of the practically negligible competition they will give to our own men of science, our doctors, our professional and tradesmen, should make employers and the American public ready and eager to sanction their acceptance in our communities as men trained to serve. War-shortages of trained men in schools and in industry call for the help these men can give. The example of New York and Massachusetts in accepting their credentials and granting them official standing in their professions, might well be followed by other states. Proper surveillance by the authorities will eliminate any possible danger of sabotage in defense industries from such refugee workers; well kept records on each individual will keep out those who may masquerade as refugees in order to do under-cover work for the dictator.

American men and women will see in these victims of oppression, their brethren under God; coming here in desperation to ask us to give them the shelter and the protective help of a just and free nation can and will give them.

THE AUBURN EDITION

Growth of the COURIER in number of subscriptions was noted in last week's final report on the Crusade and 100% coverage drive. Last week marked the first appearance of the Auburn Edition of the COURIER. With the Elmira Edition and the Rochester Edition, the COURIER now appears in three forms, serving the Catholic interests of all the Diocese and of all parts of the Diocese.

Auburn stands out as an important element in the Catholic life of the Diocese. The faith has always been strong there, based on the type of Catholic immigrants who settled there in the earlier years of the past century. Churches and schools have been built, convents and rectories, a high school, a hospital, so that a complete plant for Catholic worship and Catholic development and Catholic culture, has long been the prized possession of its parishes and its parishioners.

The devotional life of its people, the healthy growth and influence of its church societies, the splendid training of its Catholic youth, the zealous striving for the better thing of life by a consecrated clergy, past and present, have made Auburn an ideal abode for the children of the Church. From its homes have come down through the years vocations to the religious life, to the secular priesthood, to home and missionary projects. Every part of the Diocese and places beyond diocesan confines have known the ministrations of Auburn priests, Auburn Sisters. Five of the latest group of diocesan priests volunteering for service as Chaplains in the Armed Forces of the United States, are from Auburn homes.

The COURIER is striving to meet the need for a Catholic newspaper that will give proper attention to the Auburn District and to every one of its Catholic interests. The hearty cooperation of the people, and the appreciated interest of the priests, are encouraging to the COURIER as it prepares to meet the needs of its Auburn District subscribers. May we be privileged to give voice to the truly Catholic life that marks all the cities and villages of the Auburn District.

HE THAT IS OF GOD

The gentle personality of Jesus is so constantly to the forefront in His life, that we are apt to forget how sternly He could and did speak when occasion called for sternness. It would be all wrong for anyone to picture Jesus as One Who preached the doctrines of the Father, but had no care how His teaching was received by His hearers. He told the multitudes that to reject His teaching was to accuse Him of the sin of untruthfulness, to strive to convict Him of sin. He told them of their wickedness that marked them as not of God: their wickedness was refusal to believe in His word.

"You hear not my words, because you are not of God." It is a serious thing for one created by God, placed on earth to serve God, destined for an eternal reward with God in Heaven, to be told that he is not of God; that he has no part with God, that he is no friend of God's, that his earthly career and his career beyond this earth is definitely away from God. Unbelief is always a sin: can never in itself be an indifferent thing.

His hearers understood well what His declaration meant: "Because you are not of God, I angered them. It led them to try to defend themselves. He was a Samaritan, of a class looked down upon by ordinary Jews: He had a devil: He claimed to be a greater than their father, Abraham: whom did He make Himself? How could He promise that those who heard His words should not taste death forever?"

Rejection of Christ is never static: it never stops with merely ignoring Him, it goes on to definite warfare against all that He stands for. Rejection of His word, anger at His statements, led directly to the taking up of stones to kill Him. His time was not yet come: He was ready to die in the fullness of time: now He hid Himself from them, and went out of the Temple. Unbelievers have tried for 1900 years to stone Him, to destroy Him: He still hides Himself from them, because of their wickedness. Never does He hide Himself from those who hear His word, because they are of God.

Part of the Trade

I suppose that every profession has some factor in human beings that interests them—a dentist no doubt notices teeth, a barber notes the haircuts, a tailor the clothes. But I had a new instance in point. The porter brushed my shoes after the brief run from Cincinnati.

Suddenly he looked up: "Didn't I have you on the Pullman this morning too, the one that came into Pittsburgh?" I agreed he had. "I thought so," he triumphed. "I knew you the minute I looked at your shoes."

Library Signpost

Notes and Quotes

By Rev. Benedict Linneman

Perhaps the most inspiring item in last week's Catholic news round-up was Archbishop Beckman's letter to the Catholic chaplains who have gone from his archdiocese of Dubuque to serve with the armed forces. It is candid and forthright in recognizing the grave dangers they will be facing—particularly the moral dangers.

Out of this final, paternal letter, I like these lines best of all:

"Keep united with Christ in prayer. Keep close to Him as the vine, that you may stem immediately from Him, and His life sap may flow into you entirely, saturate you completely, and from you pour out its uncton over all your works, that He be the principal Cause and you but the instrumental cause of all your activity. Only what is of Him is of any avail—what's of yourself is only a handicap. This need not take up much time. It's only a matter of serious recollection, self-control, custody of the heart, and self-denial."

"You strive to bring out the divine in every man, the noble, the knightly, the heroic, and the seriousness of life in the face of death, the Christ that was stamped upon them in baptism and confirmation."

Readers of this column who have sons, brothers, or friends in the service might like to have the following paragraph from Archbishop Beckman's letter, to send in their next letter to their soldier or sailor boy:

"Tell them from me, I did all I could to save them from war, but now that we are in it I want them to measure up to their duty. Tell them from me that if they keep clean, keep in peace with their God, offer up their lives if necessary in obedience to the call of their country out of patriotic motive supernaturalized by religion, they can win a kind of martyr's crown. Tell them how we pray for them daily at Mass, in holy hours, frequent ejaculations all day, and not only for Catholics, but for all alike, all children of the same Father in heaven, Who is personally interested in each one of them, Who assures them He has counted the hairs in their heads, and regards them as the apple of His Eye."

One thing the Archbishop writes in his letter seems to me to be an uncanny "spotting the future" and providing for it now:

"When the boys come home, and perhaps find the people disillusioned and disaffected at the price paid and to be paid, should false teachers arise and take advantage and evil forces attempt to take hold, in spite of all our efforts to keep control, then you and your boys will have to save the day. If you truly reflect Christ to them now, they will want nothing of anti-Christ then."

In his lecture last Sunday evening at Aquinas Institute, Mr. Frank Sheed quoted Thoreau's "Most men live lives of quiet desperation." Not noisy desperation, Mr. Sheed reminded us, but quiet. I suppose it comes from the half-realized terror that it is later than we think. Whatever be the reason, the Divine Physician (might I dare to say, the Divine Psychiatrist?) provides us with two searching remedies—His Divine Mercy, and the wisdom of Mother Church.

His Divine Mercy heals the causes of man's "quiet desperation" through the Sacrament of Penance, where the priest who represents God acts not only as judge, but also as physician and teacher. In the healing quiet of the confessional, a man is relieved of the burden of his cankering sin, and filled with a new hope. The priest is called upon to give him counsel and comfort, to be not only a rod, but a staff. I make bold to say that Catholics who make frequent and intelligent use of the Sacrament of Penance with a good director will hardly ever be bothered by the affliction of "quiet desperation."

A very helpful book on this part of a Christian's life is Father John Heenan's Priest and Penitent. It is proving very popular at the Catholic Evidence Library.

God's second great means of healing the burden of human desperation is the wisdom of Mother Church. That wisdom is rooted in twenty centuries of applying the fruits of the Redemption to the souls of men. It is the fire flower of countless holy Minds who knew God and who knew themselves. It is full of peace and joy. It radiates light and beauty.

If you are willing to spend a little extra time in reading, you may discover, with the joy of a Cortez on his peak in Darien, this Pacific Ocean of the soul. Or if the ocean is at first too deep and forbidding for timid sailing, you might explore some of its sheltered inlets and bays in such a book as Father Garesche's The Will to Succeed (also in the Catholic Evidence Library).

This simple and appealing book is a rich manual of personal guidance. It has chapters on Perseverance, Study, Profiting by Mistakes and Failures; on Prudence, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude; on Pleasure and Happiness; on Choosing Friends, and Choosing Amusements; on the Care of the Body, and the Hygiene of the Mind; on Temptations, and Kindly Thoughts, and Self-Mastery; on Falling in Love, and Choice of a Helpmate.

I recent read in Cardinal Newman: "It is very certain that a really holy man, a true saint, though he looks like other men, still has a sort of secret power in him to attract others to him who are like-minded, and to influence all who have any thing in them like him." And I thought of Dorothy Day, and the Baroness de Hueck, and Peter Malin, and Mother Stevens, to say nothing of a few priests and sisters whom it would be offending good taste to mention.

Books never sleep. If you question them, they hide nothing from you; if you misunderstand them, they never complain; if you are ignorant, they cannot laugh at you.—Abraham Lincoln.