

Transcription of a local news report dated
TUESDAY, AUGUST 23, 1898

**OPENING OF A NEW CATHOLIC CHURCH
AT GILLINGHAM**

The opening of the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, erected at the cost of Mr. J. G. Kenyon, of Gillingham Hall, took place on Thursday, a large congregation being present, including members of the Catholic Church from neighbouring missions. The Church has been built in the Roman style by Messrs. Allen, contractors, Beccles, from designs by Mr F. E. Banham, Mayor of Beccles, and forms a beautiful little "mass-house." It is still incomplete, the designs providing for campanile, as well as the existing sanctuary and nave, sacristy, confessional, and lobby on the south side. The structure is of red brick with stone dressings, and the dimensions 77 feet length, 22 feet width. The roof is covered with green slates. The oval windows afford plenty of light in the interior, where there is a circular apse and circular ceiling, and the walls are divided into bays with pedestal columns, cornices, &c., of the Doric order. It being a feast day, scarlet draperies were suspended on the pilasters, adding thereby to the general effect; while the beautiful altar, with its burning lights and ornaments similar to the Vatican, added a charm of its own to the new building. The church was blessed on Wednesday afternoon by the Rev. Father Fulton, O.S.B., by faculty from the Bishop, of the diocese, together with the altar linen, tabernacle, and picture of Our Lady, which occupies a prominent position at the east end of the church. Low Mass was said on Thursday morning, at 11 o'clock, by the Right Rev. Dr. Riddell, Lord Bishop of Northampton, who was assisted by Canon Duckett, D.D., of Norwich, and Canon Rogers, of Ipswich (chaplains), Father Elred Kindersley, O.S.B., officiating as master of ceremonies. Among the priests in or near the sanctuary were the Rev. Father Vassall, C.S.S.R., rector of Bishop Eton Liverpool, Rev. Father Hassan, S.J., and Rev. Father Carroll, S.J., Yarmouth, Rev. Father A. Scott, Lowestoft, Rev. Father E. Scott, Gorleston, Rev. Father Francis Fleming, O.S.B., Bungay, Rev. Father Jones, S.J., Bury St. Edmunds, Rev. Father Mason, Southwold, Rev. Father Anthony Bulbeck, O.S.B., and Rev. Father Day, S.J. The Very Rev. Father Prior, O.S.B., of Downside (Father Ford, formerly of St. Benet's mission), presided at the organ. The Mayor of Beccles was present in his official robe, and wearing the chain of office. He was received at the church door by members of the Corpus Christi Gild, of which he is Warden, who formed in procession and preceded him to his seat near the sanctuary, with the macebearer in attendance. After the service the Gild conducted the Mayor to the Hall. The sermon was preached by the Bishop from Luke xv.31, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." Premising that it was God who created man, and breathed into him the breath of life, thereby constituting his Fatherhood, the preacher showed that by earthly relations God taught man love, respect, and obedience to His authority, and that they were all children of God. The place of a child was the home of its parents, and for that reason they as children of God must live with Him, in the home He had provided for them in this world - the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Some of His children strayed like the prodigal son, but the Father was always ready to receive them back again, and to forgive and forget. It was God's wish that they should always be in the "household of faith," that they should live under the direction of God our Father, and be led by Him in everything; that they should show Him respect and love and obedience. The Scriptures taught that what belonged to God the Father belonged to the blessed Trinity, and they must also draw the conclusion that it belonged to them as children of God. Then what had they? They had the light of truth in its fullness,

revealed to them by Jesus Christ and taught by the Church; and they had the graces of God, and special graces according to their particular positions and needs in life. These were at their disposal through the Church, for there was no limit to the generosity of God. Therefore, being sons of God, living in the household of faith, children of the one Holy Catholic Church, they had not only light and truth, but they had also grace through the constant application of the merits of Jesus Christ through the Sacrifice of the Altar. They might say, therefore, they had all that they required; but there was a further gift besides light and grace, and that was none other than God Himself, who had bestowed Himself upon the world by the great mystery of the Blessed and Adorable Sacrament. Possessing as they did Almighty God, the Church possessed the greatest treasure possible, the very foundation of all good; they possessed all things. What the Church was in general to the whole world, every little building raised up as an oratory, or a church or chapel was to the faithful who lived around and about it. And so, while they thanked God for this little temple which had been raised up by the generosity of a family known to them, let it remind them of their home, the Church of the Living God, the home of all the faithful. Here the truth would be taught as it was taught in all parts of the world. It would not be the views or ideas of any individual person, but the teaching of the one true and infallible Church. Here they could know the truth; here they could receive the Sacraments of Holy Church, and the fullness of grace for all their needs; here was the Fountain of all truth. Thanking God for the erection of this building, thanking Him that He had taken possession of it by allowing Himself to be placed in the Tabernacle, let them ever remember that they were the children of God and must live in His home, His house. They must never desert Him, but pray and beseech their Father that all persons who came here to worship and honour God in the use of the Mass may one day receive the Divine welcome before the Throne, "Son, thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine." The Te Deum was sung after the sermon, and the service concluded with the "Ave Maris Stella." The Bishop afterwards administered confirmation to a candidate.

By invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Kenyon, a large company, numbering some 100 guests, met the Bishop at luncheon, which was served in a large marquee on the lawn in front of Gillingham Hall by Messrs. Shelling and Sons, of Norwich. The chair was occupied by Mr Kenyon, who was supported on his right by the Bishop, Mrs. Kenyon, the Mayor of Beccles, who attended in his robe of office, Mrs. Fred. Smith, Major Worswick, Mrs. de Poix, Canon Duckett, Mr. Fred. Smith, Father Hassan, S.J. Among those also present were - Dom. F. Fleming, O.S.B., Miss M. Kenyon, Miss Anne Kenyon, Miss C. Kenyon, Miss S. Kenyon, Mr. J. Kenyon, Mr. C. Bellasis (Lancaster Herald), Mrs. O'Gorman, Mr. and Mrs. Helsham, Mr. F. J. Banham, Mrs. Todhunter, Mr. and Miss Cuddon, Miss Palmer, Mr. and Mrs. E. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Austin Smith, Captain and Mrs. Halpin, Mr. and Mrs. Crimmen, Mr. and Mrs. Allen, Mrs. G Herbert, Mr. and Mrs. Ling, Father E. Scott, Miss Tweddell, Father Carroll, S.J., Mr. Basil Worswick, Mr. R. Worswick, Father A. Scott, Dom Kinderseley, Don Meinrad Fulton, &c.

After luncheon the Chairman first submitted the health of "Our Holy Father, the Sovereign Pontiff Leo XIII." In asking those who did not belong to the Catholic or Roman Catholic Church to drink to the toast, he said they did not wish them to pledge themselves to anything but respect for the Sovereign Pontiff. Catholics had a special reason to be grateful to Pope Leo XIII, and to regard the Sovereign Pontiff with affection and honour, inasmuch as he

had always shown a wonderful affection for this land of ours. The Chairman joined with the toast the name of her most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, referring to her as the most perfect specimen of womanhood England possessed. She had an extra claim upon the gratitude of Catholics because of the special marks of friendship and consideration she showed to the Holy Father by sending a special envoy to congratulate him on his golden Jubilee, and also for the musical honour she paid the Pope's special envoy at her own Jubilee. The toast was drunk with musical honours, the Beccles Rifle Band playing "God Bless Our Pope" and "God Save The Queen."

The Very Rev. Prior Ford proposed the health of the Lord Bishop of the diocese, and remarked upon his lordship's geniality and interest in all the people with whom he came in contact. His lordship was here to-day not merely because this was a festive occasion, but as the ecclesiastical head of the diocese. He (the Prior) thought this day would be a historic event for all of them. They had just opened a church in connection with the mission at Beccles, which would be associated with the name of the Bishop of Northampton. He thought they might ask the Bishop to regard this as a representative occasion of what was going on so often in many portions of his diocese. They not only wished him health, but that the work he had already done throughout the diocese might be continued, and he (the speaker) hoped as representing the Benedictines, they might have a share in this work. It was the Bishop's authority which bound them together; it was his voice which spoke to them with authority; and so, when they drank his health it was as holding that position and with the hope he might have strength and health to hold his position amongst them for many years to come. (Cheers.)

The Bishop, in response, said he went to Downside in the year 1846, and was placed under the tender care of the good Fathers there. They might trace some development perhaps. (Laughter.) He must say there had been some progress in this poor desolate diocese as he found it more than eighteen years ago, and he must bear testimony to the great help he had received from the chapter, from the priests both secular and regular, from the Benedictines, and also from the laity. He took the opportunity to express publicly his sincere gratitude to all those good gentry who had come forward to help in the diocese during those eighteen years, and on this occasion he could not help mentioning the names of Mr. and Mrs. Kenyon. (Cheers.) There were other people here, too, to whom he was indebted. One was a former fellow student at Downside - he would not mention his name - but certainly one felt deeply indebted to such persons for coming forward with their valuable assistance. In the diocese of Westminster a person might become a founder by laying down £1000. He thought it was a great deal too much. (Laughter.) He would allow any person in his diocese to be a founder for £500, and his name would be held in everlasting benediction. He was very much obliged to them for so kindly accepting this toast. Certainly his health was very fair in spite of the eighteen years that had passed over his venerable head, during which he had been driven like bird or shuttlecock from one part of the diocese to another, and travelled long distances to carry out such works as these. He was thankful God had blessed him with good health, and he should be very pleased indeed to use it still further to His honour and glory during the time He might spare him; and he hoped when the end came he might be able to say what his predecessor said before him, "I think I have done my best for the poor dear diocese." (Cheers.)

The Mayor of Beccles rose to propose the next toast, "Our neighbouring missions," which he thought he might call their worthy selves, because

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most of those present were connected with one or other of the neighbouring missions. He thanked several of the Fathers present for their kind help at various times, and referring to the grand contingents from Yarmouth he said that he was more than pleased to mention that town owing to the fact that he was partly a Jesuit himself - not a Jesuit in disguise, but he had been educated at one of their colleges and would never be able to repay the debt he owed them. The names of Canon Duckett and Father Hassan were associated with the toast.

To reply, Canon Duckett said he took it that the toast was an expression of goodwill towards every Catholic mission, and to that he most cordially responded. To any one who had the interest of the diocese at heart the raising of a new mission and a new church was a joy, and they had the good wishes of all. Anything that they as neighbours could do they would be ready and happy to do, joining hands in helping forward the good cause.

Father Hassan also responded, and as one of the most recent arrivals in the diocese, thanked the surrounding priests for the very kind and fraternal way they received him amongst them. This was a proud day for them all, to see a new church opened in this place; and it would be associated not merely with the name of his lordship the Bishop, but also with the names of Mr and Mrs Kenyon.

Mr. Helsham next proposed "Our guests," and extended a hearty welcome to all in the name of Mr. and Mrs. Kenyon. He coupled the names of Mr. de Poix and Mr. Fred Smith, with that of Mr. Bellasis. They wanted a great deal of help here, and he hoped they would all go away and talk about them, and get as many prayers as they could for them, and as much money as they could. (Laughter and cheers.)

Mr. de Poix said they were all very much impressed with the beautiful church that had been opened that day, and speaking with some little knowledge of architecture he congratulated Mr. Banham on his work. He felt perfectly sure when it was completed the church would be the admiration of them all. They had therefore to thank Mr. and Mrs. Kenyon for the beautiful gift they had presented to them, and also to thank them for the very handsome banquet they had enjoyed on this occasion. (Cheers.)

Mr F. Smith and Mr. Bellasis, "Lancaster," also responded, the latter remarking that he would very gladly "herald" forth the great progress that was going on at Beccles and Gillingham.

The Chairman next proposed the health of Mr. Banham in his capacity of Mayor of Beccles. It was a great pleasure to them on this side of the water to be honoured officially by the presence of the Chief Magistrate of Beccles. He also proposed his health as architect of their church, and upon that subject desired to say a few words to his neighbours and fellow parishioners. He could conceive of no higher honour for a layman of the Catholic Church - except the great privilege of giving a son to the priesthood, and of kneeling to kiss his anointed hands before one's death - than to be permitted to raise an altar to Almighty God, where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass might be offered up. In Suffolk, through the generosity of those who were with them that day - at Bungay and Southwold - altars had been reared and no expense had been spared in their adornment. At Lowestoft the foresight of their Bishop and the energy of Father Scott gave ground for anticipating the building of a suitable church at no distant date; so that, with Beccles, the north of Suffolk was tolerably well provided for. But in South Norfolk matters were very different. Since the sanctuary lamps were extinguished, and the altars overthrown and Holy Mass abolished in the time of Queen Elizabeth, how desolate the land had been! Loddon and Harleston, Diss and Trowse, and all and every country village

from Gillingham to Norwich, were ignorant alike of the Great Sacrifice. The portion of the small wayside chapel, plain and unpretending, which had been opened that day, could not vie in beauty - it did not pretend to - with the old parish church now in other hands. They could not rival their Protestant friends in the refinement of their music, nor in the charm which an English version of psalms and prayers, welded into three centuries of national life, undoubtedly possessed. But they had built a "Mass House," to use, and use with pride, the name which former generations of Anglicans gave them in opprobrium. Here they trusted that by degrees a little group would assemble to hear and love the Holy Mass. Here the Holy Mass would sanctify the daily toil, the Nuptial Mass would bless the married and domestic life of coming generations; here the Requiem Mass would help the dead, and solace the survivors of many a family. For it was the Holy Mass that mattered, as had been well said lately by one who, alas, did not believe in it. It was the Mass that united them, rich and poor, high and low, children of the Church. And it was the Holy Mass which would draw to them, in God's good time, those for whose conversion they longed with ever increasing impatience. Mr. Banham had carried out his work as architect with no small skill and persevering earnestness, and he tendered him his most grateful and respectful thanks. He also proposed Mr. Banham's health as Warden of the Gild of Corpus Christi; and trusted his reign of office would add in every way to the welfare of the gild and the benefit of the brothers. Coupled with the architect were the contractors, to whom he also tendered his last thanks for their painstaking labours.

Mr. Banham, Mr. Fred Allen, and Mr. Gibbs having returned thanks, Canon Rogers proposed the health of Mr. and Mrs. Kenyon as the founders of the new church. The toast was heartily drunk, and Mr. Kenyon having briefly responded, the company dispersed, as many as could find room attending Vespers at church, which were sung by the Very Rev. H. E. Ford, O.S.B., Prior of Downside.

The Rifle Band played selections of music during the afternoon for the entertainment of visitors, and a large company was entertained at tea by Mr. and Mrs. Kenyon, Messrs. Snelling and Sons again catering. At 8 o'clock there were popular devotions and hymns with a sermon by the Rev. Father Vassall, followed by the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Father Vassall (educated at Eton and Balliol College, Oxford: M.A. 1880), preached on Devotion to the blessed Virgin, showing that she was the mother of all Christians, inasmuch as they were the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, her firstborn. He urged them to love and trust her as a mother, promising that she would then show them a mother's care during life and at the hour of death. Special services were continued on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. We regret to say that, owing to a severe indisposition, Father Fulton was unable to take his allotted part in the function or afterwards at the luncheon.