

Where Catholics and Non-Catholics Should Unite

Bishop McFaul Says They Should Work Together for the Stamping Out of Evil in a Spirit of Patriotism and Service

By the Right Rev. James A. McFaul,

Bishop of Trenton, "Father of the Federation."

TO CITIZENS of every creed who would maintain the ideals of this Republic the American Federation of Catholic Societies extends the right hand of fellowship.

Its meetings, which begin next Sunday, represent the efforts of our laity to keep sound the pillars of the nation. It is devoted to a high service in which Catholic and non-Catholic may co-operate. It comes to the City of New York with the desire that its deliberations may aid the State and be of benefit to all mankind. The federation represents no propaganda; it demands for the See of Rome no special privileges; it is not at variance with any tradition of free government.

I have been connected with this movement from its inception, and if I thought it contained a single principle which would cause friction with our neighbors I would cheerfully throw its constitution and by-laws into the depths of the sea.

The American Federation of Catholic Societies is primarily a laymen's movement, and the oldest one of its kind. It is similar to organized efforts which several religious denominations among the non-Catholics have inaugurated in the last few years. The basic idea on which it was founded may be traced to Germany, when in 1848 various Catholic Congresses were held for the purpose of discussing questions of politics and public morals. This is the reason why on the program of Catholic Week it will be found that the Teutonic element has so prominent a part. Similar congresses and meetings of the Catholic laity were held in other European countries and served to bring together leading men for the discussion of questions affecting the well-being of the body politic.

The formation of the American Federation of Catholic Societies was first suggested in a circular letter issued by the Knights of St. John. From the first, I thoroughly approved of the idea. Before taking active steps, as I did, in the organization of the movement, I consulted with prominent leaders of the Church, who indorsed it as a move in the right direction. Among the first to join the federation was Archbishop Messmer, whose influence among our German co-religionists counted for much.

The first general convention was held in Cincinnati fifteen years ago, and since that date the federation has been steadily increasing in numbers and influence. I doubt not that the coming convention in the City of New York will be the largest of the kind ever held.

The clergy are consulted regarding the policies of the federation, yet it is in reality not under the direct control of the hierarchy, although Bishops are on the Advisory Board. The Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Bonzano, the representative in this country of the Holy Father, and three distinguished prelates of the American church, Cardinals Gibbons, Farley, and O'Connell, will deliver addresses, yet the essential leadership of this important movement is in the hands of the laity. The President of the organization is John Whalen, a New York lawyer, who held important municipal offices, and has a wide experience with men and affairs.

The utmost freedom of discussion is encouraged, for the convention of the federation is an index of the mind of the faithful. Its reflex extends to the thought of those of all religious beliefs. The Catholic laity coming in contact with their fellow-citizens in business and in all relations of life give to these deliberations a breadth of view which greatly enhances their value. The inspiration which these sessions bring is carried by our laity to every part of the nation and enables them to impress upon all with whom they are in touch that the church has a message for the community at large—to those which are both within and without its fold—that it would aid in every plan to advance pure government and good morals.

The federation naturally cannot enter into any relations with other organizations in which any question of doctrine

would be involved. It does stand with them, however, on a broad platform of American citizenship. Although the founders of the Republic avoided with the utmost care any semblance of a union of Church and State, this is a country which is governed and inspired by ethical and religious standards.

General Washington said that of all dispositions and habits religion and morality are the indispensable supports. In

In my mind there is not the slightest doubt that if the Catholics and the non-Catholics, the Jews and the Gentiles, united for the stamping out of evil success would crown our efforts in many directions.

The American Federation of Catholic Societies, which has the inspiration and guidance of the mother church and at the same time has so wide a reach into the world, is peculiarly adapted for work-

vate morals, of social reforms, of the relation of the Church and the State to the theatre and to amusements in general, of education, of literature, in fact, of everything which has to do with the eternal fight against wrong. Our brethren of every household of faith, therefore, may with profit follow the deliberations of the convention, for they will find in them a helpful index of what is stirring the nation, and see many ways in which they could lend a hand.

One of the most important meetings is that to be held at Carnegie Hall and dedicated to "social service." What a wide field, indeed, is that which comprises service to one's fellow-creatures! We Catholics for centuries called it "charity," that charity which gives the cup of cold water in His name. Our orders of godly men and women have for ages ministered to the poor; our laity have given not only of their wealth but of their time and energy to the uplifting of their fellows who have been less fortunate in the battle of life. I have in mind now as I write the memory of one of our leading American bankers, a Catholic, whose services to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul took him to the homes of the forlorn week in and week out, as an inspiring presence. In his zeal for good he consulted with hundreds of men of other beliefs with whom he worked for the cause of humanity. We have in our own day and generation many such Catholic laymen who devote their best thought and energies to the welfare of the Other Half, with all the devotion of St. Francis of Assisi of old.

We Catholics are as anxious as are any class in the community, whether they be church workers, settlement workers, scientific sociologists, or what not, to see that social justice is done; that childhood does not take the burden of toil too soon; that poverty is mitigated; that the aged are protected; that the orphan and the foundling, despite life's handicap, have as good a start as do children born with the advantages of the American home.

Catholics and non-Catholics can surely co-operate on such lines as these. The Catholic Monsignor and the Episcopalian Bishop may share similar views as to the relation between the city and charitable institutions. Many misunderstandings might be smoothed away if our position on certain matters were clearly understood.

The readers of THE NEW YORK TIMES, I doubt not, have followed the discussion which has been going the rounds of the press regarding moving pictures. Delegations in which were both Catholic clergymen and non-Catholic went to the capital of the State of New York to urge that the youth of this country be fended from the obscene and the immoral when they sought recreation in the film theatres.

The stage can be made a means of moral uplift; it can also degrade. The actor can be a charlatan, or an inspired teacher. It is within the province of a theatrical manager to purvey wholesome fun or even excellent instruction. The attitude of the Catholic Church toward the theatre has always been liberal yet consistent. It has shown itself willing and ready to co-operate with men and women of high ideals for the maintaining of the decencies of life. The questions regarding the stage which will be discussed at the coming convention should be considered by every father and mother and by every citizen. What will be brought forward there will not be actuated by any narrow spirit, but will represent the thought of broad and liberal minded experts.

The Catholic Church has encouraged its sons and daughters in amusements which strengthen the body and relax and clear the mind. It has sought to develop their social instincts. Whatever may be brought out along these lines at the approaching conferences will, in my opinion, be well worth the study of the public.

Education in its various phases will naturally be on the programs of the various societies. The Catholic Church has



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vain, as he well expressed it, "would any one claim the tribute of patriotism who would labor to overthrow those great pillars of human happiness." It is essential to the weal of the State that the counsel of the leaders of religion should be heard. I need hardly say that moral decadence means national deterioration. The disregard of domestic ties, the loosening of restraints result in the death of character.

To prevent disaster falling upon any land, those on the watch towers of religion should be ever on guard. It is their duty to sound the alarm before it is too late. In a realm where there are so many evidences of material prosperity, where wealth and luxury abound, we must scan the horizon for signs of peril. It is in the spirit of patriotism and of service, therefore, that the American federation desires to bring itself and its religion before our non-Catholic friends, so that when any great question arises, when any moral danger is descried, it can extend the hand of co-operation. The federation can say, for instance, on the matter of divorce to the Episcopalians, to secular or civic societies, to legislators, to all citizens: "Come, let us work hand in hand for the maintenance of moral standards, for the education of youth, for the uplifting of humanity."

ing with citizens of every creed and racial strain in the furtherance of sound morality. There is such wonderful accord in many ways that all who believe in decency and honor should be allies.

The Catholic Church has been assailed in some quarters as ascetic and unreasonable in its attitude against divorce. As the years go by we find publicists and leaders of thought recognizing the correctness of its position. Other religious bodies have parties within them as radical in their views as Catholics. One of the most eloquent appeals for the passage of a national divorce law was made in Congress by a Catholic. The remarriage of divorced persons panders to progressive polygamy. The differing laws on marriage and divorce in the various States make us a byword among the nations. Should not all organizations which recognize this peril co-operate in putting an end to what is a hideous excrescence on the fair growth of our national life? Every citizen who has a vision for the future must recognize that the American home must be kept clean, and there is more than the wisdom of earth in that Divine mandate of the Church that "what God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

The federation is a fit forum for the discussion of all questions of public and pri-

In the past been much misunderstood for taking the position that religion and secular instruction should go hand in hand, and yet its view is good American doctrine. Was it not Daniel Webster who pointed out that the school should inculcate the fear of God as well as train the intellect?

Should children be brought up without the knowledge of the Decalogue and the Golden Rule? Lately there has come into the public prints much discussion of the so-called Gary system, which strives to correct what is in reality a serious defect in public education by providing that children may receive religious instruction for a part of the day, but not in the public school buildings. The Catholic Church has consistently stood for its parish schools. The federation has for years sought to demonstrate to the American people that it is unjust to tax the Catholics for the support of schools to which they do not send their children. This is the issue which has been made

clear by the federation, and it is well worth considering by all classes of the community.

It is far from our purpose, however, to be the carping critic. We are not seeking any undue advantage and would antagonize none. We, as Catholics, know the average non-Catholic American to be a man of broad mind and large heart. The Catholic is no alien in the United States, for his ancestors, as did those of men of other creeds, fought for the liberty of the nation. The spirit of our federation in so far as it reaches out to the non-Catholic citizenry is one of frank discussion among those of the same birth-right.

We are not devoted to any political purpose, for as there are men of all parties in the organization, it is manifestly absurd that such an organization should seek to control through partisan activities. Catholics, as do all other citizens, safeguard their interests and record their convictions at the ballot box.

There is nothing which the federation may ask which is not in accordance with the principles on which this Republic was founded. It does not consider Catholics as a law unto themselves, but as free men entitled to rights and privileges. It does not demand, it does not seek to carry its point by assault—it appeals to enlightened public opinion. The federation looks upon publicity as a searchlight. It has no secret policy. It does not sap and mine. It is frankly an organization of societies for the advancement of the civil, religious, and social interests of Catholics. It is an instrument attuned by conservatism for radiating throughout the world the waves of Catholic opinion on important issues of the day.

Its object may be described as twofold. It is of value not only to the authorities of the Catholic Church to have its laity freely discuss matters of vital interest. Through the medium of the press it serves to give non-Catholics a clear idea

of what the Church means. It shows many points where men of all sorts and conditions may agree on policies for the betterment of the human race. It is a powerful organization which is growing every year in influence, as its purposes are better understood both by those within and those beyond its ranks.

Its function is through publicity and by precept and example to uphold the tenets of the Catholic Church, and if necessary to become their champion. If we can make the meaning of Catholicism clear through the federation and similar agencies, the Church will need no defenders.

It has been fifteen years since the federation came into being, and in that time it has banished the ogres of distrust and the demons of prejudice. The men of America, Catholic and non-Catholic, are realizing more and more the marvelous and beneficial influence of a Church which for ages past has been the conservator of liberty and the paladin of free institutions.

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