

# INFLUENZA BAN LIFTED IN INDIANA CITY

## Rector at Laporte Protests Against the Acts of Civil Authorities.

A spirited and successful campaign was recently made at Laporte, Indiana, against the closing of the churches, schools and places of amusement and in favor of a strict quarantine of influenza patients. The Rev. F. J. Barwell-Walker, Rector of St. Paul's Church, without imputing unworthy motives to the civil authorities, made a strong protest against their acts in closing the churches, in an open letter to the Daily Herald. The letter in part follows:

"From whatever standpoint one considers the matter, the closing of the churches is wrong. There is, to say the least, a reasonable doubt whether such order is legal. In various states the order has been disregarded, and in Maine the Roman Catholics are prepared to carry the matter to the highest courts. If one looks at it from a mere medical standpoint the whole thing borders on the ludicrous. We are told that it is necessary to prohibit crowding to prevent the spread of the disease, and that it is necessary to close the churches on that account, BUT NOT THE FACTORIES OR STORES! Why? Because they are essential to the general welfare (at least from a financial standpoint) while the churches are not! They are non-essentials, and are thus classed with theaters, etc. It is necessary to enter an icecream parlor for light refreshments, but it is not necessary to enter church to worship God! It is necessary to tolerate crowded street cars and trains, but it is unnecessary for the faithful few to meet together and join with the priest in the offering of the holy sacrifice for the removal of the epidemic from our midst.

"I repeat that from every standpoint the closing of the churches is wrong; it is a sin in the sight of Almighty God, a sin impossible of commission if the people of our city and country had retained the old belief in the love and power of their Creator. It is lack of faith which has brought about this insult to the Deity. Our Master would say today: 'Fear not germs that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.' But we are so bound up in physical conditions that we are far more careful about the things which concern the body than we are about the things which concern the soul. We are putting 'safety first'—physical safety—before principle, in spite of all that has been said about the changes wrought by the war, and are curtailing the spiritual power of the nation in this great emergency. When the outcome of the war was in doubt, the President called upon the churches to observe a special day of intercession for the triumph of our righteous cause. The power of God was recognized, and His response to our petitions rapid and sure. Now we are told, in effect if not in word, that whatever power God may have had in relation to the war, He has none when it comes to disease.

"Supposing that the authorities are right in restricting crowds, how does that affect the churches? How many are so crowded in this day of carelessness and unbelief as to constitute a public menace? If any are, it would be easy to limit the attendance in proportion to the seating capacity (in line with a notice I saw in the city limiting the number in a certain

room to eight.) How many sick people go to church? Certainly far less than go to factory or store. But, as one member of the city board said, 'it is difficult to know where to draw the line,' and so the line is drawn where the least harm results materially and the most morally and spiritually. Chicago decided that it would be morally and psychologically harmful to close the churches—and the same truth applies here. Anybody who knows anything at all about psychology knows that such action is far more likely to increase disease than it is to lessen it. The basis of all modern civilization is Christianity and anything which lessens its influence must be bad for the people morally.

"To those who believe in the power of intercessory prayer it may be some consolation to know that the holy sacrifice is offered daily, but that does not make up for the loss of united intercession. If our city board is actuated by a genuine desire for the moral, spiritual and physical welfare of our people, they will lift the ban from our churches at once, and ask for an increase in the services of intercession rather than a decrease. We may do what we can by prayer, by the anointing of the sick, by the pleading of the great sacrifice in the blessed Sacrament of the altar; but we cannot do what would be possible—as during the war—without the united intercession of our people.

"In the name of God, and for the sake of the people, I ask for the authority to exercise the right guaranteed under the constitution, publicly now as I have privately before, with a willingness to accept a limitation in numbers if such be deemed really necessary. I am ready to cooperate in every way possible for the stamping out of the epidemic short of a virtual denial of God's power and that I must protest against with all the forces of my faith in Him.

"The only logical alternative to the removal of the ban on the churches is to close every factory, office and store, and to prohibit the use of pool room, club, or Y. M. C. A.—everything in fact where there may be at least as much danger as there is in a half-empty church. Think of the foolishness of 40 or 50 women crowded into a small space for Red Cross work, while the same number is prohibited in a church seating ten times that number!"