

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. M. BOSSAERT

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER
EPIPHANY

THE LEPER'S REQUEST

We read in today's Gospel of the poor leper, who, in his desire to be cured of this dreadful malady, threw himself at the feet of Jesus, crying: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." This was a very short prayer, but undoubtedly a good one.

1. The fact that it was short reminds us of the words uttered by our Saviour in the Sermon on the Mount, not long before the leper came to Him: "When you are praying, speak not much, as the heathen do; for they think that in their much speaking they may be heard. Be not you therefore like to them, for your Father knoweth what is needful for you, before you say a word." The leper did not describe all that he suffered in mind and body on account of his disease, nor the pain of being excluded from all intercourse with his fellowman, nor did he plead his helplessness and poverty, in order to move our Lord to help him; he was convinced that Jesus knew all these things, and so his prayer simply expressed with child-like simplicity the feeling of his heart.

Let us learn from this leper not to make long, elaborate prayers, nor to suggest all sorts of motives, when we are asking God to alleviate or remove some trouble, but rather to let our hearts address Him with simple confidence. Our heavenly Father knows all things; therefore, before we speak, He understands what we want to say, and He would understand just as well if pain and suffering should prevent us from using any words at all. He is not like a human being, who requires to hear touching details of our sorrows before he can be moved to help us. Like the royal Psalmist we may say with confidence: "Lord, all my desire is before Thee, and my groaning is not hidden from Thee."

2. But the leper's prayer was good, as well as short, for in it are combined all the qualities that make a prayer good. With deep humility the poor suppliant, conscious of his own unworthiness, cast himself at the feet of Jesus. His faith in our Saviour's power and his confidence in His goodness were boundless, and what wonderful submission did he display to our Lord's most holy will! "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." Our prayers are liable to many defects, but none is more common than a lack of real submission to the most holy will of our heavenly Father. We often say: "Thy will be done," but we do not mean what we say. We want to have our own way, and the gratification of all our desires and requests. We even go so far as to expect God to conform to our will, instead of conforming ourselves to His will. God's will with regard to us is infinitely good; He is all powerful and all-wise. Surely this is reason enough for submitting our own will absolutely and unreservedly to His Divine will, in all circumstances of life, whether they affect our temporal or our eternal welfare. "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." "Thou canst help me." The leper spoke with the utmost confidence, and every Christian ought to pray thus from his heart with regard to all his circumstances. The laborer at the plough, the artisan in his workshop, and every worker at his daily task ought to say: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst bless the seed sown in the earth; Thou canst protect the crops, both whilst growing and when stored up in the barns. Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst bless the labor of my hands and the sweat of my brow, so that I may have health and strength to earn a livelihood for myself, my wife and children."

Let not those who are blessed with worldly prosperity forget that all their happiness and good fortune depend solely upon God's will. Let them pray, therefore: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst cause my present happiness to continue; if it be Thy will, I myself, my family and household shall escape all misfortune." But let him who is in sorrow, and weighed down by affliction, take courage and say: "Lord, if Thou wilt, my troubles may soon be at an end, my circumstances may improve, and gladness may fill my soul." Let the sinner, too, come with confidence to Jesus and say: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean and pardon all my offences, wiping them out, as if they had never been committed."

Such prayers are short and good, like the leper's prayer in today's Gospel. Those who pray thus are sure to be heard, and our Divine Saviour will say to each of them, as He said to the leper: "I will, be thou made clean." Amen.

THE COUGHING NUISANCE

There are some noises in church that are very annoying, and by no means the least is the coughing nuisance. Somewhere in the church, perhaps at a very solemn moment, too, some one coughs. Immediately it is taken up by others, chiefly out of sympathy. In a short time all kinds of coughs will be heard. There are the basso profundo, the baritone, the tenor, the alto and the soprano cough; the short, dry hack and the down-in-the-d-p-coller struggle; the nervous rattle, the timid chirp, the broad boom and the fearless blast.

And presently the person who started the performance, if he sits back and listens, will find the church a perfect pandemonium of sounds that would make a boiler factory a place of peace in comparison. Just why the church is selected by many as a fit and becoming place to do their all-week coughing is hard to understand. Of course, no one can find fault with the cough that is necessary to remove material that should not be allowed to accumulate. Training will control the other kind. Coughing is for the most part a habit, and often becomes very harmful to the performer.—New World.

DEMOCRACY IN
INDUSTRY

Gerald C. Treacy, S. J., in America

Having succeeded in a War for democracy it is but fitting that we should strive to carry out the principles of democracy in every phase of our national life. The quicker we are to realize that democratic principles must enter into industrial relationship the sooner will the prevalent labor-unrest subside. It is all very well to talk of the increase in the wage scale but with the increase in the price of commodities going forward, a higher wage means nothing more than keeping things about as they were. It is the purchasing power of the dollar that counts, and that is less than it was a few years ago. So as a matter of fact and figures the worker today with his increased pay is no better off than he was five years ago when the wage scale was much lower. Many economists hold he is not as well off. To stabilize the capital-labor-relationship much more is needed than a scale that measures money-returns for efficient workmanship. Because radically that sets the two elements of industrial power poles apart. It separates their interests and creates a class consciousness that is by no means healthy. Until a working plan is formulated that is based on the salient fact that capital and labor have mutual interests, that a state of antagonism is not necessary, and that the industrial plant is the man's as much as the manager's there will be endless friction no matter how we may juggle a wage scale.

American labor in its Atlantic City convention gave expression to its aims in a very intelligent way. These aims are democratic, and reduced to simple terms they merely mean that labor asks a share in industry. It refuses any longer to be treated as a commodity. In their labor program the American Bishops voiced the same idea in dealing with the reconstruction problems that the country must face. It is a very Catholic idea, as is guided the relationship of master and man when the world was nothing but Catholic. Ultra-individualism that came sweeping in with the religious revolt of the sixteenth century pushed the human element in labor to the wall and the machine coming to its perfection as a labor-saving device in the nineteenth century minimized the sacredness of the person of the worker until Leo XIII. was brave enough to declare that the condition of the vast majority of the working classes was little better than slavery. The War was on. In its progress excesses were committed on both sides. At bottom the error was the same: "My interests are not your interests." It really took a big national danger to make us realize that for real efficiency there must be a partnership between labor and capital. And it is along the line of partnership that reconstruction must work if America is to forge ahead as a true democracy. The Bishops' Labor Program faces the problem squarely:

"The full possibilities of increased production will not be realized so long as the majority of the workers remain mere wage-earners. The majority must somehow become owners, or at least in part, of the means of production. They can be enabled to reach this stage gradually through cooperative productive societies and copartnership arrangements. In the former the workers own and manage the industries themselves; in the latter they own a substantial part of the corporate stock and exercise a reasonable share in the management. However slow the attainment of these ends they will have to be reached before we can have a thoroughly efficient system of production, or an industrial social order that will be secure from the danger of revolution."

Of course there are those who would shut their eyes to present conditions and call such a method of social reform radical and Socialistic. And there are those too who declare that such an ideal order can never become practicable and real. Yet the fact is that joint committees have been formed in several groups of trades and these committees discuss questions of mutual interest with the management of the concerns for which they work. It has been found quite possible to get the shop in touch with the office on terms of mutual help and understanding. This is more like Christian democracy than the old-time method of hearing a shop committee once a year when there was a wage-rate to be adjusted. It makes practical admission of the very Catholic truth that labor is more than a commodity to be reckoned with by the office when there is need to be thrown into the discard when the need ceases.

Not only is it feasible to bring the worker up from the low degree of a

mere wage-earner but he can be given a live interest in his work that no time-clock can stimulate. He can be made to realize that the factory is his factory, that the business is his business. But it cannot be done by the stand-apart method or that aloofness in the employer that breeds discontent and antagonism only in the employee. The President's Mediation Commission in its report on industrial unrest has shown very clearly in the case of the packers what the spirit of aloofness will lead to: "The chief source of trouble comes from lack of solidarity and want of power on the part of the workers to secure redress of grievances, because of the systematic opposition on the part of the packers against the organization of the workers." In studying the full report there is every evidence that the real source of trouble was mutual suspicion. And how could that ever be removed without a conference of some kind between the yard and the office? The report of the Mediation Commission goes to the root of the matter in declaring that "American industry lacks a healthy basis of relationship between management and men." It goes behind the strike question in a general survey we shall find that the worker may demand higher pay and shorter hours but his heart is crying out to be treated as a man. That is what the Commission means by the wrong relationship that prevails and makes for discontent and suspicion. Until democracy enters in and gives the worker a real interest in the wrong relationship will continue. And democracy can enter in.

A very good story of how democracy entered into twenty large businesses is told by John Leitch in "Industrial Democracy." Leitch had faced the labor problem from below, in the old stockyard days. He had the conviction that until the worker was a part, and a real part, of the factory, or business, there could be neither industrial peace or progress. What the Bishops' program lays down as possible John Leitch has carried out into practice. In the score of business concerns where his plan has been put into effect the results have been surprisingly good. The strike has disappeared, labor has received a better wage and capital a higher return in work and profit. Increased output, lower costs, bigger wages and more profits make his plan rather more than the theory of a dreamer. The Packard Piano Company of Fort Wayne, Indiana, is one of the concerns that learned the value of true democracy in industry.

An unsuccessful strike was the beginning of the awakening. The company had won and the men came back to work, so the heads of the concern considered unruly labor had been taught a lesson. It makes little difference which side was right in the argument, the office stood out against the demands for a closed shop, and the men had to come back on the terms of the office. The actual result was that the factory was not delivering pianos in the right quantity and those that were turned out were not of good workmanship. The full force was working but no man was contented and the president of the company realized that poor workmanship meant bad business and ultimate failure. Mr. Leitch took over the management of the factory. A weekly meeting was inaugurated to discuss the grievances or difficulties of the workers. The factory was to be a democracy henceforth for the benefit of all. Everyone was to share in the increased efficiency of the plant. Money would be saved with increased output and this money would go in equal shares to the company and the workers, and every two weeks the workers' share would be given them as a dividend on wages. At the end of the first month the cost of production had been cut five and one-half per cent, and for several months they gained an average dividend of five per cent, and never less. The force originally worked ten hours a day six days a week. At the suggestion of the workers the nine hour day was introduced with the result that more work was done.

Many other interesting details enter into the history of this successful experiment in industrial democracy. The net results were shorter hours, increased output, better work, increased income for the worker and a feeling of personal responsibility and interest in the individual employee. It became the worker's factory as much as the owner's, and one-time grievances vanished into thin air. Mr. Bond, the president of the Packard Company, explains its present prosperity this way: "We used to build pianos. Then we stopped building pianos and began to build men. We have adopted as a slogan for the Packard Company, 'If there is no harmony in the factory there will be none in the piano.'"

We are at the parting of the ways in our industrial world. The evils that have grown upon our economic system must be remedied or the system will fall. The answer to the radical Socialistic cry for the destruction of the whole social fabric is to cure the ills and reconstruct the system. The old order passed with the signing of the armistice. The new order means either progress or barbarism. Europe is at the brink and so is the world. America can point the way as American Bishops have shown and industrial democracy has proved by actual experiment.

True friendship is like sound health, the value of it is seldom known until it is lost.

DIVORCE IN ENGLAND

Mr. Justice Darling, having eighteen cases of bigamy to try at the present Kent Assizes, spoke at Maidstone as follows, says the London Catholic Universe: "Lately, people have come to take a very low view of marriage relations. It is easy enough now, goodness knows, to get a divorce—the simplest thing in the world. Some hundreds of people were divorced in London on the day that I came here, and there is a movement, which I dare say will succeed, to allow people to get a divorce in county courts on very cheap and easy terms. At present people do not seem to take the trouble to apply for divorce. I have got eighteen cases of bigamy. People regard the marriage contract as of no importance whatever. As a matter of fact, it is the most sacred engagement that any one can enter into, and yet many people treat it as if it were no more binding than an engagement to go out to dinner. Barring Mr. Justice Darling's assertion that marriage is 'the most sacred engagement possible for men and women, we thoroughly endorse his strictures. But how has the sacredness of marriage and honorable fidelity to the pledged troth fallen into such contempt amongst English men and women?"

This depreciation of the Sacrament of Marriage is simply the working out of the Protestant "Reformation." The "Great Rebellion," as Dr. Jessop candidly styled it, cast off the authority of the Holy See which maintained the sanctity of Henry VIII's first marriage at the cost of losing England. It continues to uphold the inviolability of the nuptial tie. In the middle of the last century a Protestant English Parliament gave its religiously nondescript blessing to a limited measure of divorce, the thin end of the immoral wedge. And now our social thinkers would drive the wedge home and divide the husband and wife to any number of divorces and "re-marrriages"—a flat repudiation of St. Paul's teaching in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. The present off-spring of that National Church which claimed a strictly biblical foundation and pretended only to have eliminated "Roman" corruptions of the pure evangel treats this word of God even as Luther did St. James' Epistle, as so much "straw." On the slippery inclined plane of sexual passion there is, in fact, no stable equilibrium to be found between the severe Catholic summit of indissoluble marriage and the base of profligacy, with disruption of the social unit—the family.

Such considerations gain added cogency when one is faced with such incidents as that of a well-known member of Parliament's apology for his recent divorce and his account of the manner in which it was obtained. A legal verdict was secured while the foundation which the law requires for that verdict was absent, and then the defense of that operation is actually lauded by an evening paper as "courageous and public-spirited." It is no use for either the person concerned or his defender in the press to ride off on the plea that Anglicanism, "more cruel than the law," hinders the "reform of the latter." The State Church, being subject to the State, is not in a position to be either "cruel or kind." It is the remnant of Christianity which still persists in our laws, that still restricts the general loosening of the matrimonial tie amongst us. Such abuses of the law as have been here disclosed, to say nothing of the outrageous position in which the second lady concerned in the case was placed, are no sign of healthy revolt against legal hardships, but rather of the general lowering of the ethical senses so manifest just now in certain circles of society.—Catholic Bulletin.

WHAT THE AGE DEMANDS

FATHER HECKER'S ESTIMATE OF
WHAT KIND OF MEN THIS
AGE DEMANDS

"The age is superficial; it needs the gift of Wisdom, which enables the soul to contemplate truth in its ultimate causes. The age is materialistic; it needs the gift of Intelligence, by the light of which the intellect penetrates into the essence of things. The age is captivated by a false and one-sided science; it needs the gift of Science, by the light of which is seen each order of truth in its true relations to orders and in a divine unity. The age is in disorder and is ignorant of the way to true progress; it needs the gift of Counsel, which teaches how to choose the proper means to attain an object. The age is impious; it needs the gift of Piety, which leads the soul to look up to God as the Heavenly Father, and to adore Him with feelings of filial affection and love. The age is sensual and effeminate; it needs the gift of Fortitude which imparts to the will the strength to endure the greatest burdens, and to prosecute the greatest enterprises with ease and heroism. The age has lost and almost forgotten God; it needs the gift of Fear to bring the soul again to God, and make it feel conscious of its responsibility and of its destiny. Men endowed with these gifts are the men for whom, if it but knew it, the age calls. Men whose minds are enlightened and whose wills are strengthened by an increased action of the Holy Spirit. Men whose souls are actuated by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Men whose countenances are lit up with a heavenly joy, who

breathe an air of inward peace, and act with a holy liberty and a resistless energy. One such soul does more to advance the kingdom of God than tens of thousands without those gifts. These are the men and this is

the way, if the age could only be made to see and believe it, to universal restoration, universal reconciliation, and universal progress, as far as such boons are attainable.—Catholic World.

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