

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE MASTER'S VINEYARD

"At that time, Jesus spoke to His disciples this parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard." (Matt. xx. 1.)

It is a kind God who has prepared for man not only a reward but also means adapted for its attainment. He is unlike an earthly householder, for He offers inducements so enticing that man—without injustice to himself—can not reject His call. His appealing voice must strike at the roots of every heart; His kind invitation must impel men's energy to set to work for His cause; and His outstretched hand must beckon with infallible certainty to the pilgrims of earth. Really the labor that He requires of man is not a labor of toil—it is a labor of pure love, where toil has no recognizable appearance. He is not an exacting master, who requires every unit of labor to be performed for the recompense promised; nor does He wince with searching, suspicious eye over the laborers in His vineyard.

It is rather with a longing desire and an affectionate regard that He requires of man. This thought is brought out beautifully and clearly in the Gospel of this Sunday. God the Householder, is shown as inviting all classes of men into His vineyard—men who have neglected the yesterday, and men who would be ready to neglect the today. Once He finds that, under the impulse of His inspirations, they are willing to enter into His vineyard, He hands out to all alike a pleasing invitation. He could have allowed them to stand all the day idle, as they were free beings, but His solicitude is that of a father of infinite kindness and boundless love. He can not gaze indifferently over the creature of His own hands, nor feel uninterested in his welfare. His desire is that heaven—the real home of His bliss—be shared by this noblest of the creatures of His hand. There is no selfishness on His part, but generosity that knows no limit.

Sinful man would stand all the day idle were it not for the enticements and the voice full of love of the Master who made him. It would seem, now, since God had endowed man with a soul possessed of such noble faculties and had allowed him to acquire a knowledge of the things of God in the future life, that he would not need much further help from his Creator. But, as in the beginning man fell from grace and integrity, so now he is no different; and the same God of mercy who could have annihilated primal man and woman, but spared them and allowed them to prepare for a reward in the future, now continues to have mercy upon man, continuing in similar ways and greater degrees. The sin of man at present is much worse than that of man before God had fulfilled His prophecies and promises by giving His Divine Son. The path has been laid out plainly, the presence of the dangers made more clear, and the possibility of eternal disaster without God's sustaining hand has been pointed out to all. Grace has been abundant.

In fact, the infinite merits of the cross can come to man, if he but prepares for them, bringing to him the strength and fortitude necessary to follow the path of virtue—the path that leads to glory. However, even with all these helps ever attending man, and the great treasure-house of graces open to him, still God's solicitude is extraordinary. We can not even compare God's love for us with the love of a father for his children. It is far too superior to it, and can be called by only one name—love of God for His children. Man shows his baseness and his ingratitude by frequently rejecting the offers of his kind Father, and shutting his heart to the reception of His sanctified benefits. The independence of man has in many cases reached a stage where it is absolute defiance, and the sovereignty of the Creator has been desecrated, if viewed from a human standpoint. The clear notes of His voice have been hushed by the cry of the modern gods that men have set up for themselves. These hideous works of the creature offer certain joys, certain satisfactions—but they are only of the moment, and the trail they leave behind them is one of disgrace. They can do nothing to build up purity and straightforwardness in the heart of man, but they fill him with the rottenness of the demons. Yet, with all these lessons, which surely must be apparent to every reasonable mind, man will continue to offer incense to these false gods. He gives them the best and most precious fruits of his labors. Not a day can pass but he must approach the foot of the pedestal on which they stand, and pledge to them his allegiance.

What are these gods that man has erected to receive his homage—nay, all the works of his life? They are many and varied. One of the greatest and most conspicuous is money. Never before as today, nor perhaps ever in the history of the world, did man bend his knee so willingly to Mammon as at the present day. He is devoting all the powers of his mind, putting to extremes every energy of his body, and sacrificing willingly the dictates of conscience, to worship at this shrine. In return he is given many things, but in the majority of cases they are things of earth. He could turn

them into things that would profit his soul; he could use them for the honor and glory of God; he could alleviate plentifully the sufferings of poorer humanity—but how little of this does he really do? Mammon demands of a man selfishness. It is but an angel of the stanic house that delights not in what man gives himself, but in that of which man deprives God, while thinking he is gaining much for himself. Money, after all, is dumb. What other idol could be set up except one without feeling, without hearing, without sight, without intelligence?

Another great idol that man has set up for himself may be called the idol of worldliness. This is more the god of the young than of his elders. The child's greatest ambition today is not that it may rise at the embrace of the Father of heaven, but that it may swoon in the pleasures of a world shifting toward materialism. The little knowledge that it is inclined to gain will not reach beyond the things that we see and hear, and so it wishes to dwell only in things beneath the skies; and after all, where the mind dwells, there is the body too. Thus it is that we see thousands of young people offering the best and freshest days of their lives at the shrines of Dame Fashion or the god of show. Parents seem to be carried on by the same tide. They appear inclined to think that the children of the present generation do not need the restraint and guidance of those of the ages when faith was more alive. Why?—it may be asked. And we answer that it is because they, too, are frequent worshippers before the idols of unrighteousness.

Will the day ever come when all these people will heed the voice of the Master calling them to labor in His vineyard? For them the time is fast approaching when His voice will grow fainter. There has been a time when it was clear and resonant, but they were deaf to its call. Can they not expect that His Maker—He of all wisdom and goodness—will trifle with them longer? What an insult to His Majesty, to His divine omnipotence, to His kind heart, to His abounding love! Why will people not believe His wisdom, and cast aside the wisdom of the world? Why will they let the fleeting things of earth blind them, and not look to the rays of God's wisdom for light to see the truth and the way?

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MIRACLES AND THE MODERN MIND

At an enthusiastic meeting in England Mr. G. K. Chesterton discussed the modern mentality towards miracles, especially in regard to the miracles of Lourdes. In his happiest vein this distinguished Catholic convert showed how absurd is the position of the sceptic who refuses to believe in supernatural miracles, but is all too ready to believe in what may be termed miracles of nature.

He told a story about a notorious French sceptic, who declared that if he saw a miracle happen at Lourdes he would not believe it, but that if a man's leg dropped off and another grew in its place before his eyes, he would not say that a miracle had been wrought, but that it was a manifestation of the power, purely natural, by which a crab or a lobster grows a new limb in the place of a lost one. The sceptic was prepared to believe that it happened naturally. "And people speak of that man as a sceptic!" exclaimed Mr. Chesterton, and he added, "Would that I had a title of such colossal faith." By that standard of faith such sceptics would have to believe not only that instances of diversion or reversion of the laws of nature might occur by natural means, but also that when an isolated instance of this happened when that man as expecting it to happen, it must be regarded as a purely natural phenomenon and that God has nothing whatever to do with it.

This is neither logic nor common sense. Catholics know their logic. They know too that water does not run uphill. That is against nature. But if a saint prays that the water

run uphill, and it immediately does so, they know that such a fact indicates a mighty power at work that can overrule the natural law. That power they believe is the power of God.

For such phenomena we use the term miracle. "In the beginning," concluded Mr. Chesterton, "God performed a miracle by exerting His Will and creating the world, and we Catholics believe in Lourdes and its miracles, because, the same power that created the spring at Lourdes created the world."—The Pilot.

TEA SUPPLY INADEQUATE—PRICES HIGHER

Tea prices are going up mainly because tea is being demanded by millions more people. Tea is the cheapest and certainly one of the most palatable and satisfying beverages known. But the tea-growers have been unable to meet the tremendous demand. It takes three years for a tea bush to mature to the plucking stage.

SWINGING BACK TO CONSERVATISM

There is ever indication that the current year will witness a considerable swinging back to conservative positions in many departments of social life. This may be deemed by some as deplorably reactionary; but by the majority of thinking men it will be welcomed as a happy change from the overconfident experimentalism of the last few years.

Too hasty progress has its dangers. It is likely to lead into untried ways, which will prove blind alleys, or unpropitious roads that terminate on the brink of an abyss. For the safety of mankind it is expedient that the rate of advance of the last years be somewhat reduced. A pause, that affords humanity a little leisure to do some thinking, is highly desirable. The human race is much in the same position as a conquering army which, if it imprudently rushes its advances into the enemy country, courts disaster and invites defeat. Even now close observers of the times declare that we have not caught up morally and mentally with our physical and material progress, and that the very accomplishments to which we point with pride will prove our undoing. Be that as it may, one thing is sure; namely, that a period of conservatism can do little harm and much good.

Political conservatism seems to be amply assured by the outcome of the recent elections. Evidently the country was afraid of radicalism and more experimental legislation. It had not fared any too well under the avalanche of new laws that had been turned out. It sincerely desired a rest from further legislative experiments. In this instinctive feeling it is perfectly right. What we really need is not more legislation but rather a moderate degree of respect for the existing laws. It is ardently to be hoped that the various legislative bodies will adopt a slower pace in the coming years, and that they cease to glory in the multiplicity of laws they can enact. Legislators serve their country as well by preventing foolish laws as they do by passing wise ones. The greatest benefit which the legislators at present can confer upon our law-harrassed country, is to stop the orgy of law making that of late has been indulged in.

Upon ever widening circles it begins to dawn that we have gone far enough, if not too far, in the direction of centralization; and that in this respect also a return to conservatism is eminently advisable. Amendments calling for an extension of federal control and a creation of new bureaucratic machinery no longer receive the popular acclaim with which they were hailed some time ago. The child labor amendment is meeting with growing opposition and its chances are faintly dwindling. Apparently the country is getting over the amendment craze and returning to a saner view on this subject. The shifting of responsibility for existing evils must cease. Let the States realize their duty and shoulder their own problems. Let them face their own difficulties and not cowardly clamor for national assistance where they are perfectly able to help themselves. It is here that we need conservatism more than anywhere else, if the original structure of our government is to survive. Too much tinkering has been going on, and we should now be earnestly concerned to maintain as much of the erstwhile form of government as is still left.

Labor, as far as can be judged at present, is not bent on any radical policies but will pursue the old course under its new administration. Obstruction from these quarters need not be feared. Labor is quite anxious to see prosperity restored to the country and will carefully avoid any move that might prevent a full economic reconstruction. It has entered on various fields of capitalistic enterprise and in this manner has given valuable hostages to society. Capital on its part seems to have learned a lesson and is determined to render service to the community for the privilege of a certain measure of freedom.

Bigotry has ceased to be fashionable. It only thrives in backward communities. Isolated outbreaks of course, occur, as in the "Public

Ledger" and Curtis periodicals; these, however, will not be able to interfere with the general harmony that as a rule has blessed this country. Though inadequate notions with regard to religion prevail, it is nevertheless true that religion has gained in respect and that its social value is more and more recognized. Hence, we find all around us a conservative atmosphere and this fact is very reassuring.

Now if the blatant popularizer of science and the irrepresible reformer fall in with this general tendency of the new year will promise to be a very happy one. May be it is too much to expect that; but a conservative community will only give half-hearted attention to the ranting of the pseudo-scientist and be wary of the wild schemes proposed by meddling reformers who are so much concerned about improving their fellowmen that they entirely neglect themselves. In education also a little conservatism will not be amiss. Before introducing new methods, let us sincerely try out the old ones. We have not been entirely fair to the old things. If we give them a real chance, we may find much good in them. At all events, the return to conservatism is a very auspicious omen.—Catholic Standard and Times.

FRIENDSHIP, LOYALTY AND LOVE

The present season is one of those periodic intervals that immemorial custom has consecrated to the making of good resolutions. During these days men bid glad adieu to the old year, and hail with joyous acclaim the coming of the new. The eagerness with which they speed the departing year on its way and acclaim its successor suggests the irrepresible tendency of human nature to forget the past and look forward to the future.

Planning for the future now engrosses men's attention. With the buoyancy of spirit suggested by the new born year, they look forward to the attainment of higher power and purer principles. They hope to walk in a whiter light, to breathe a diviner air, and to let nothing mean or unworthy, nothing base or ignoble blot the fair scroll of the virgin year which time will just unrolled before them.

One resolution that we commend to men at the beginning of the new year was suggested in a recent address of His Eminence, the Cardinal, that has attracted wide attention. Speaking upon the subject of true friendship in human relations, His Eminence cited the tremendous power of affection upon life, and the need of unflinching loyalty in all our relations with our fellow men. "God created human life and human beings in such a mysterious way," said His Eminence, "that He intended no man to be alone. He made the human mind and human heart so that every human individual is a person apart; nevertheless, he is never quite by himself, he is never himself alone. He is himself plus or minus the influences of association. He is big and great, or he is petty and mean, just in so far as he opens wide his heart, his mind, and his soul to the finest influences of life, to the most sacred, the most beautiful, the most profound human associations which surround him, or closes up his heart against these influences and proves false to his highest instincts."

"The world," continued His Eminence, "has become so cold and selfish, that it is almost afraid to acknowledge true friendship, and in so doing is false to the highest instinct which God has planted in the human heart for a noble purpose." In this statement, pregnant with meaning and vibrant with inspiration, His Eminence has laid bare one of the fundamental faults in human relations, and indicated its corrective.

There can be no doubt that a steel cold atmosphere of selfishness pervades the world today. This is the cause of many evils, and, if allowed to continue, will be the source of future bitter tribulations. The hatred between man and man, the selfish pursuit of pleasure, the growing disregard for all authority, that are evident the world over today, are symptomatic of the chill hand whose touch is death, that has been laid by materialistic philosophy upon the heart of our modern civilization.

To make men's hearts glow and melt beneath the warmth of human affection spiritualized by Divine charity, is the great need of the age. It was enunciated by Pope Pius XI. in his Immortal Encyclical upon Christian Reconciliation, when His Holiness with all the urgency he could command exhorted men and nations to enthroned in their hearts the principles of justice and charity, preached and practiced by Our Divine Lord. And it was further elucidated by His Holiness in a subsequent allocution, in which he said in effect that it is not enough to have justice, we must also have charity, for charity is paramount.

If men were more human and charitable in their relations with others, if true human affection had its rightful play in business life, in social life, and in industrial life, this world would be a better and a happier place to live in, and the peace which men desire so earnestly would be nearer to realization.

by, and that is loyalty." Friendship, loyalty, love—these are the mightiest influences in our civilization. When applied to our relations with God, our superiors and our fellow men, they embrace an idea that unlocks the secret of human life.

Looking forward to another year, and making good resolutions are holy and wholesome when spiritualized and uplifted by such a consoling and a constructive thought as that which we have culled from the address of His Eminence.

Putting friendliness into human relations, stimulating the springs of human affection, and letting divine charity produce loyalty in our lives are worthwhile resolutions that will result in a better understanding, a more cordial spirit, and a closer rapprochement among men and nations, that will bring about more quickly the regeneration of the world, so aptly and beautifully summarized in the motto of Pope Pius XI., The Peace of Christ in the Reign of Christ.—The Pilot.

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