

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST

SPIRIT AND FLESH

"For if you live according to the flesh you shall die. But if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh you shall live." (Rom. viii. 13)

What does the Apostle mean by this? This only, that the flesh with its concupiscence and lusts must never get such power over our will that it will carry us along with it and make us obey its longings and desires when we know these are forbidden by Almighty God. I say "this only" because to have the flesh as no sin; neither is it a sin to feel the disorderly movements of the flesh that lead to sin; but it is a sin to consent to these and to follow them. For this reason we are told that if we mortify the deeds of the flesh to which these movements of the flesh lead us, we shall live. But what does the word "mortify" mean? It means to destroy that which makes the life of a thing. Notice here the Apostle does not tell us to mortify the flesh itself but the deeds of the flesh. To do this we need not then attempt to kill the flesh, but we must destroy all that gives life to its deeds.

What are the deeds of the flesh? They are the seven capital sins—pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth. Can we kill them? In the most important sense we can. We can get them under our control that, after we awhile, they will move us but slightly and cannot influence us to any great degree. We shall feel from time to time that they are still present in us, but that cannot disturb us much. We shall have taken their strength away. We shall have made them so weak that we can check them easily.

Ought not each one of us strive to get ourselves into that blessed state? But how can we do it? Make up your mind to do it. Form a good resolution, one that will not change but that will last for life. Then live according to that resolution. When pride is aroused, refuse to follow its promptings; when covetousness moves the heart, stop the eager desire for gain; when lust would lead you away, contend against the thought until it is driven out; when anger disturbs, seal the lips with the sign of the holy cross; when gluttony makes you long for feasting and drinking, refuse to go where these things are going for the one who is the object of envy; when sloth tempts you to self-indulgence and inactivity, stir up the fear of God and holy shame within the soul. For sloth is a destroyer indeed of all that is truly manly and heroic in us.

But all this is about as hard to do as anything a man can do, some may say. Yes, it is hard to do, but the success is sure. Shall a man do less for God than for himself? See the which is necessary for the body and success in the life of only a few years in this world. Shall a man not do as much for the good of his soul and for eternal life in the next world?

Is it really so hard as it seems? By no means. We make it harder than it really is by putting it all together and by thinking we are to do it all at once. This is not true. It must be done by degrees, slowly, patiently, perseveringly, but surely. The devil makes us think it harder by telling us, when we feel the sharpness of the first struggle, "You can't bear it this way, and gives you the grace. And most people, almost all Christian souls, do not have it 'this way, for life.' Those who keep up the struggle get stronger day by day. In them the flesh and the movements of sin grow less day by day. The devil, however, wishes us to believe the lie he tells, to make us give up the struggle. Do not listen to the lie and it cannot hurt you. Remember always, it is a lie, and the mind will not take hold of it.

We can make it all the easier by trusting God. Who will always help us in the struggle. Pray more. Go to confession often. The confessor will then help us and remove much of the burden by good advice. Go to Communion often, and God Himself will make it easier for us than we imagine by giving His own strength to the soul at that time. Only begin earnestly to control the flesh, continue perseveringly to this, confession and Communion. This, with daily morning and evening prayer, will take away very many difficulties. Soon we shall find we have truly mortified the deeds of the flesh, and then indeed we shall live, for the flesh will then be dead or dying fast and too weak to hurt the soul. Keep, then, in the mind the text from the Epistle of to-day: "For if you live according to the flesh you shall die. But if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh you shall live."

CATHOLICITY IN SWITZERLAND

According to the latest Swiss census Catholics are making headway in those Cantons where they were previously in a very small minority. In the Canton of Vaud, the Catholic population has risen from 36,980 to 59,980. There are more Catholics in Lousanne, Morges, Orbe, and Vevey during the past two years, while in other districts the numbers have remained stationary, and in two cases only have gone backward.

Foreign Catholics come in great numbers to these Cantons and settle either in the industrial towns or in those winter health resorts such as Lousanne, once a stronghold of Pro-

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testantism, which has seized the glorious Gothic Cathedral there. But now in this very place the Catholic population has risen from 10,422 in 1910 to close on 20,000, nearly double in three years.—Church Progress.

TEMPERANCE

WARNING AGAINST
INTEMPERANCE

Not only Christ's life and doctrine, but the sound sense of mankind demands that sincere aversion for any vice shall be shown by the conspicuous practice of the contrary virtue. Do you not see the need of this making war on intemperance? Do you not know how widespread an evil it is? What family without its drunkard, or at least some one who is in danger of falling into drinking habits? What neighborhood is without its plague spot, the saloon? What community without its steady stream of horror, crime and misery due to drunkenness? The pathway which leads from the saloon to the poorhouse, from the saloon to the insane asylum, from the saloon and is strewn with unnumbered wrecks of humanity. Therefore, every family should have its member or members who are conspicuous for the practice of total abstinence. Every neighborhood should have its band of valiant men and women who by their pledge protest publicly against the vice of drunkenness. Every community should have its organized permanent, energetic crusade against the saloon. Courageous men and women are everywhere needed to protest against drunkenness and to labor to suppress it. If you love a happy home, practice total abstinence, for it is the most efficacious means of showing your detestation of the family's deadliest foe. If you love the people of God, take the pledge; for drunkenness is the worst enemy the true faith has this day to contend against. If you have the good of society at heart, touch not the intoxicating glass; for most of the evils we have to deplore in our social and political life are the progeny of this prolific mother-vice—intemperance. Every element of Christianity in a good man or woman sharpens their anxiety for the welfare of their brethren. The drunkard is my brother; he needs good example to reform; I have made up my mind to give it to him. "We know that we

have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." (1st. John iii. 14.) I may be too poor to give money for the reform of drunkards, but I can give what is more precious—good example. The family that can not benefit by having a total abstainer among its members is hard to find. The parish that is not greatly helped by a total abstinent society is hard to find. "It is good to be a total abstainer." "It is good not to eat flesh, and to drink wine, or anything whereby thy brother is offended, or scandalized, or made weak." (Romans xiv. 21.)

It is not sinful perhaps, for me to drink moderately, but for the drunkard to do so is a deadly peril. If he is going to be saved, he must totally abstain, a task often as difficult as martyrdom. I will help him to do it by keeping him company in total abstinence. Every one of us needs a friend, patient, edifying, loving. Heavenly Wisdom says: "Woe to him that is alone." (Eccles. iv. 10.) When struggling with any overpowering passion, poor human nature looks for a comrade. The heart cries out in danger or in weakness, "Help me!" Every drunkard in his sober moments cries out, "Help me!" I, for one, am going to answer that cry. I am determined that no drunkard shall relapse for want of my help. If he is driven by necessity to take the pledge, I am driven by charity to keep him company in it. "The charity of Christ urges us." (II. Cor. v. 14.)

Scorned and despised, the drunkard needs a friend to share his compulsory abstinence. I am that friend. I will pick him from the slough of despond, and I will cleanse him and strengthen him; I will speak tender words of encouragement to him. I will be the drunkard's good Samaritan. But some one might protest, "I do not need to abstain!" Yes, I do, for what my brother needs I need; and if any man needs help, then the help he needs is the help I need to give him.—Father Elliott.

CONVERTS AND
CONFESSION

"After Thou didst convert me, I did penance; and after Thou didst show me, I struck my thigh; I am confounded and ashamed, because I have borne the reproach of my youth." (Jer. 31, 19.)

Orestes Brownson, perhaps the greatest philosopher that America has yet produced, and the greatest American convert to the Church, said: "I never performed a more reasonable, a more manly act, or one more in accordance with the rights and dignity of human nature, though not done save by divine grace moving and assisting thereto, than when I knelt to the Bishop of Boston, and asked him to hear my confession and reconcile me to the Church, or when I read my abjuration, and publicly professed the Catholic faith. For the basis of all true nobility of soul is Christian humility; and nothing is more manly than submission to God, or more reasonable than to believe a prominent Scotch convert, writes Rev. T. W. Drumm in "The Apostolate," records his experience thus: "I confess," he says, "this general confession filled me with dismay. I was forty three years old, had lived little better than my neighbors, had a painfully accurate memory back to my eight or ninth year. I finally decided to go to a confessor I'd never be likely to see again; but circumstances at the very last moment caused me to go to the very priest whom I knew best of all. He was kind, patient, and, instead of feeling my degradation, I felt a sense of relief and happiness such as I cannot describe. I do not go to confession often enough, but I consider it one of the most inestimable blessings that God has conferred upon man."

Confession seems to be a bit puzzling to converts about to enter the Church. Afterwards, like Brownson and the other just quoted, they understand the good of confession perhaps better than we who have practised it all our lives. They fear it before; they generally love it afterwards. No wonder they fear it—their minds have been filled with nasty prejudices and ghosts of unreal difficulties. Let me answer a few questions here that I hope will set at ease many converts about their confessions. "Do you believe in self-repentance?" "Can Protestants go to con-



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fession and receive pardon?" "Can non-Catholics go to confession?" "Is it necessary for a Protestant who wishes to become a convert to the Catholic Church to go to confession before being baptized?" "Must a convert to the Catholic Church confess the sins of his life from childhood, or is baptism sufficient for the remission of all sins committed previous thereto?" "What all is supposed to be told to the priest at confession?"

Yes indeed, we believe in self-repentance, and in the necessity of it as a natural virtue, so that, with or without confession, the sinner cannot be saved without it. In fact our sacrament of penance is self-repentance sanctified by Christ and raised to a sacrament. Self-repentance in the sinner is the foundation upon which our Lord raised the sacrament. Your self-repentance is our "Do penance," and consists in sorrow for sin, satisfaction for sin, and the determination not to commit sin in future with God's help. Without these dispositions absolution is useless. "Unless you do penance, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13, 5.)

Yes Protestants and non-Catholics can go to confession—for advice and consolation, and many of them do so, but they cannot obtain pardon or receive the sacrament of penance in the sense that a Catholic would; for they have not been formally received into the Church.

Some who would not confess, confess unconsciously. A Protestant lady used to come to Cheverus, Bishop of Boston, to consult him on spiritual matters and obtain his direction and consolation. One day she remarked that confession seemed to her absurd. "Not so absurd as you might believe," said the old Bishop, smiling, "you yourself at least have felt the good of it and the need of it; for you see you have been coming to confession to me these several times without knowing it. Confession is nothing more than the acknowledgment of sins and difficulties of conscience in order to be forgiven and guided right. You have been doing that."

The story is told of a convert who had just been received into the Church. He had been in the habit of going to confession according to the custom of the denomination to which he had belonged. In preparing for his first confession as a Catholic, he paid a visit to an old Bishop who was also a convert, and told him what he was about to do, adding that it would be easier for him than for others, since he had been accustomed to go to confession. The old man responded by saying with a smile: "You are going to the real thing now." Yes, confession is the real thing in the way of true penance. The confidential confessions outside the Church are not the real thing, are not the real sacrament as established by our Lord. They are good in a way, as a preparation, but they do not give the assurance of pardon that the sinner requires. The power of the priesthood is necessary for that.

It is not necessary for one who has never been baptized to go to confession on being received into the Catholic Church. Such a one is regarded and received as if a child. The doctrine of the Church is that baptism remits all sin, original and actual sin, committed prior to its reception. In which case, of course, the convert must have the same docile dispositions as a child would have. He must have the same sorrow for sin, the same purpose of amendment required in confession, and must make the same satisfaction he would be expected to make did he go to confession. Only on these conditions would the baptism effect the forgiveness of sin.

A convert who had never been baptized would be instructed in the

teachings of the Church, exhorted to repentance for sin, and baptized absolutely, and might go to First Holy Communion. He could not go to confession first, for baptism must come before penance. He might go to confession, and find most of them want to. Even if one is not inclined to confess right after baptism, the time comes sooner or later when he will want to confess all the sins committed in his past life. Understand this is not required, but converts find more satisfaction in doing it.

If you were baptized in any denomination and wish to be received into the Catholic Church, you will be expected to make a confession of all your sins committed prior to your reception, whether your previous baptism is considered valid or not; for the sacrament of penance is for the sins committed after baptism. You need not worry, however, one whit about that; it will be the easiest part of your reception into the Church, the most consoling, and the best for your peace of mind. One convert says: "I went (to confession) full of trepidation, and came back full of joy."

Here are some of the things that your confession will do for you; it will clarify your knowledge of yourself, will help you to know the meaning and the number of your big sins, and to hate sin more keenly, will help you to be more sorry in the sight of God for them, will give a definite aim to your purpose of improvement, will help to subdue your proud, disobedient and rebellious spirit by humbling yourself to the requirements of your new faith, thus tramping on pride and self-will; it will give eternal assurance of security from sin and peace of soul; it will give warning, instruction, decision, strength and encouragement, and suggestions to avoid sin that you cannot get elsewhere or from any one but a prudent confessor who knows your needs from your own confession.

The following interesting interview I find in Segur. You'll like it. The dear old Cure of Ars used to hear men's confessions in the sacristy of his church during the morning hours. One day a rather pompous public official wearing a button of the "Legion of Honor" in the lapel of his coat strode in. Instead of kneeling on the "prie Dieu" he went directly to the cure, and after a polite salute said: "My dear sir, I wish to speak with you." "Kneel down here," said the Cure, pointing to the kneeler by his side. "I did not come to go to confession," said the officer. "What did you come for then?" said the Cure. "I came to discuss a case with you," said the member. "To discuss! How do I know anything about discussing. Kneel down here." "But, my dear sir, I wish to say that I did not come to confession; I have not the faith; I do not believe." "Poor man," said the Cure, "you do not believe; I know nothing, but you know less; I know the means of faith, you do not even know that. Do as I tell you, kneel down here." "But it is precisely confession I doubt and do not believe in; it would be sacrilege, and you would not permit it." But the old saint stopped him saying sweetly: "Believe me, my good man, I know what I'm asking; believe me: kneel down here." He did so somehow. The Cure said, "Now make the sign of the Cross—in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The Cure did the rest, and in a few minutes the pompous official went out as happy as a little child. The Cure said afterwards: "I fought with the devil and won; and behold a contented man who came for discussion and went to confession."

"Kneel down here. Go in peace, my child, and God be with you." Amen.—St. Paul Bulletin.

LITERATURE AS A RECREATION

Recommending literature as a refreshment and resource in the avocations of life, Lord Rosebery said when speaking at the Royal Technical College, Glasgow: "One great example is worth a ton of precept, and I will give you the example of Lord Liverpool. . . . Lord Liverpool was prime minister for fifteen years. He was harassed by Cannings and Eldons and all sorts of colleagues, as many prime ministers are apt to be, and he had a very arduous time of it. But what he said was this, that the only secret by which he was enabled to go on through his arduous pilgrimage of fifteen years was his practice, regularly renewed and never omitted, of reading for half an hour before he went to bed in some branches of literature wholly unconnected with his political administrative pursuits. Now that was the experience of a hard-working man—there was no harder-worked man probably of his time—and I venture to recommend it to you."

What does a sermon do for you? It elevates you. You complain that you have to shovel mortar, wash dishes, drive a horsecar, count money all day, and that such things keep the soul down to an earthly level. Well, then, go to church and be elevated. Listen to the word of God, which raises you up above the common-place things of your life, or, rather, which sanctifies them and makes you see in them stepping stones to heaven. There is no doubt that a man needs a great deal of courage to

face the difficulties of life. There is no use denying that for nearly all of us life is a hard road to travel. Then why do you say that half an hour once a week is too much to give to a sermon? For in the sermon you learn how to fight your battles. There the comforting truths of religion are brought home to you; there you learn how to hope; there you are cleansed and strengthened and equipped for the battle of life; there are taught the highest joy known to man the love of God.—True Voice.

The world would be both better and brighter if we would dwell in the duty of happiness as well as on the happiness of duty.

Christ lives, Christ reigns, Christ triumphs, and His kingdom is spreading more and more over the hearts and the minds of the human race.

To go to confession after repenting of sin is to find peace, forgiveness, comfort and strong advice. The confessional is the way to a quiet conscience.

Ask any Catholic on his deathbed facing eternity, which would he prefer, a wreath for his coffin or a Mass for his soul. Our tribute for our dead should be worthy of our faith.

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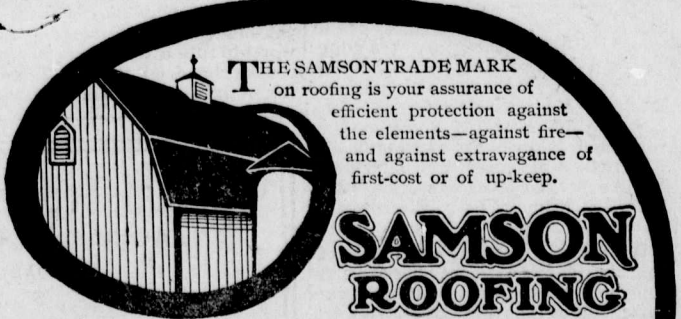
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