

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. M. BOSSAERT

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE BARQUE OF PETER

Today's Gospel contains the truths of faith that our Lord connected with St. Peter, and that are particularly precious and sacred to every Catholic. Our Saviour entered St. Peter's boat, and thence instructed the people assembled on the shore; then He ordered the Apostle to let down his net for a draught, and his obedience to this command was rewarded by his catching so many fishes that the net broke. All these events were types of the important truths that I propose to discuss today.

1. St. Peter's boat is a type of the Catholic Church, which may well be compared with a ship. Travelers wishing to reach distant lands go on board a ship and live together during the voyage. It traverses the vast expanse of ocean sometimes in sunshine, sometimes in storm, which break over the sea and threaten the voyagers with many dangers. If the vessel is seaworthy and strongly built, if the crew is efficient and capable, in due time the haven is reached, and the travelers are landed in safety. The same is the case with the Catholic Church. By means of the holy sacrament of baptism, she admits men to her company, and conveys them from this world to their heavenly home; in her the faithful dwell together during the voyage of this earthly life; the world is to the Church a wide and boundless ocean; she exists in the world, from it she gathers her children, and through it she carries them, sometimes in the sunshine of peace, sometimes amid storms of persecution and oppression on the part of the powers of the world, but she is a strong, well built vessel, and her captain is skillful and conscientious, hence she will finish her voyage safely, and bring all the passengers on board to their home in heaven.

2. The boat, on board which our Lord was, belonged to St. Peter. It was from this boat that Christ taught the people, and He chose St. Peter's barque to show us where He intended His Church to be, where authority was to reside, and where His assistance would be bestowed even to the end of the world. He indicated thus that His Church, the true Catholic Church, was to be St. Peter's barque, and that it was to St. Peter that He gave authority to teach in His presence and with His aid, and to be the chief shepherd of all nations in every age and place. Hence where ever Peter is, there is the true Church. And where is Peter? St. Peter's, the greatest church in the world, is in Rome, and in it rest the remains of St. Peter in a magnificent tomb. Close by is the Vatican, a majestic palace, where dwells the living successor of St. Peter, our holy Father the Pope, who possesses authority to guide and teach the whole Church.

3. The Catholic Church, the barque of Peter, is intended to contain all mankind, and to convey them to their heavenly home. We are happy in belonging to the number of those on board this vessel. Would that we always duly appreciated the great blessing of being born and brought up in the true Church! Would that we showed our gratitude by proving ourselves worthy members of the one, holy, Catholic Church, loyal and obedient to her commandments, doctrines and precepts, and full of love and reverence towards St. Peter's successor, our holy Father in Rome, and all his assistants, the bishops and priests who help him in his task of managing the ship. All who despise the teaching authority of the Church and put obstacles in its way, and all who persecute the barque of Peter and abandon it, will some day acknowledge with regret that it is impossible to act contrary to the will of Christ and yet remain unpunished.

Let us therefore thank God for His goodness in admitting us to the barque of Peter, as children of the Holy Catholic Church; let us persevere bravely, and resist all temptations. Many storms may assail us, but the sunshine will return, for Jesus Christ our Lord, when founding His Church on the rock, uttered the memorable words: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it," and "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Amen.

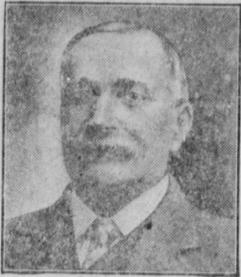
THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

During the month of July the Church bids the faithful recall the memories of the Precious Blood. The plan of Redemption included the shedding of that sacred part of the Saviour's being. The actual pouring forth of the life-giving stream sealed the infinite love of God for man. A pact signed in blood surely is evidence of sincerity on the part of the signer. Rejection of that pact by the object of such affection is clear and conclusive proof of deepest ingratitude.

The Christian who could live entirely oblivious of the salutary beneficence, manifested by God to man in the Precious Blood, is one who easily would forfeit the merits of that same pledge. Even as the warm heart-stream trickled down on the holy mount, so does that same blood empurple the lips of him who

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will mean "the end of the Protestant Episcopal Church as a part of the historic Catholic Church."

He further goes on to say that "there are many who will not stand this. What will be done, it is too soon yet for us to say. But it may be certainly known, that having been in and worked for the Church as a Catholic body, we do not propose to be compelled to remain in a Protestant one." What will be done, he indicated by saying: "It will start a procession—either to Rome or to nothing religiously—that will certainly be anything but indicative of harmony and unity. It will make the little muss over the amendment to the 19th Canon look like a pink tea party in comparison."

Perhaps it may be well to make a few comparisons for the benefit of those of our readers to whom the matter of Canon XIX is not familiar. In 1907 a canon was passed in General Convention, not without serious opposition, permitting "Christian men, not ministers of this (P.E.) Church" to "make addresses" in Protestant Episcopal churches, by special permission, on "special occasions." It was purposely so worded as to avoid all recognition of the ministerial status of these "Christian men" whom everyone understood to be the ministers of Protestant denominations, which had no episcopal forms of government; and the time of their appearance was limited to "special occasions."

Notwithstanding this obvious attempt to straddle and make the proposition palatable to High Churchmen it was felt by many that it ranged the Protestant Episcopal Church definitely on the side of Protestantism, and in the words of one of the most prominent of its opponents of this Canon tended to "destroy her raison d'être before the world." So keenly did some twenty or more Episcopal clergy feel this that they started a "procession to Rome" and the majority of this number are now Roman Catholic priests, ministering in their certain knowledge of Catholic priesthood to congregations which recognize them unqualifiedly for what they are and claim to be. Moreover, with many others who did not make their submission this time, this opening wedge started a train of thought, which, pursued logically, has in these twelve intervening years, led them to join in that continuous procession to Rome which everyone recognizes as existing.

If then, that really innocuous Canon XIX precipitated such a movement whose effects are still to be felt, the rector above quoted would seem to be right in saying that the results of this piece of legislation will make Canon XIX "look like a pink tea party in comparison." The present proposal boldly advocates all the things which Canon XIX merely implied. The ministries of Protestantism are recognized as fully as works can recognize them. Protestant ministers, provided they come through a form of Episcopal ordination, will not only be allowed to preach and expound the Scriptures in Protestant Episcopal Churches, and this with practically no assurance that they will not wrest them to suit their own idiosyncrasies, but they will be empowered to stand at Protestant Episcopal altars and solemnly consecrate the elements in Holy Communion—an act which many Episcopalians believe to be that of transubstantiation. And thus the former not only make no profession of any belief in that act as anything more than the holiest Zwinglianism, but they are still Congregational ministers in perfectly good and regular standing in their denomination!

Can one who desires to be known as a Catholic priest continue in the communion and fellowship of a church which does such things? Can one who desires to be sure that he is receiving Catholic sacraments accept them from a "priest" of such a church? Does it not make the true Catholic in the Protestant Episcopal fold realize that his church is not behind him? Can he not see that as "no fountain can give forth at the same place sweet water and bitter" so no church can be at the same time essentially Catholic and radically Protestant? How long will it take him to realize that to be consistent he must join the "procession to Rome?"

So much for the matter in so far as it affects Episcopalians. But there is another side and that is the matter as it affects Catholics. The "procession to Rome" has thus far been a sort of Indian-file affair. It has simply been a series of individuals each making up his own mind, making his own submission, and being received alone. There has been next to nothing in the way of a corporate return. Two religious communities, the Society of the Atonement in this country, and the Benedictine Monks of Caldey in Wales, have been received in a body but that is practically all. The Outlook sneeringly remarks that the only way for Episcopalians to enter the Church of Rome is by the path of repentance or at least converted schismatics by which Cardinal Manning and Cardinal Newman entered it in the last century." It is quite true that the average convert recognizes that he is coming out of just such a position but he is ready to make amends in so far as it lies in his power and he would like to see it made for the whole body or at least the Catholic-minded portion of it, of which he was a member. He may be a little sensitive but with the oppor-

tunity before us for starting something like a corporate return of Anglicans, it does not behoove Catholics to take any but a unanimous attitude. The prodigal asked to be received as one of his father's hired servants only, but that did not excuse the attitude of the elder son.

The way of the convert is a difficult one at best. It is not because he fails to appreciate his gains that he finds it hard to adjust himself to his new surroundings. The mere necessity of upsetting all his pre-conceived notions as to what Catholicism is, constitutes a burden which one who has not traversed the road can scarcely appreciate. There are many other mental changes in even the most Catholic-minded which dawn slowly and painfully and which cause wrenches in their dawning. I do not even mention the loss of worldly positions and prospects though in the case of married clerical converts they are a very real trial.

Every Catholic should be a convert-maker, and in order to be a successful one he must try to enter into the state of mind of these really Catholic-hearted persons, distressed beyond measure at the anomalous position in which they find themselves, longing for those things which they see Catholics possess, yet afraid with a great and unexplainable fear to come and take them. Sympathy with these in their evident discomfort, and an honest attempt to understand so far as one can their attitude, will enable grace to bring his work to perfect fruition and thus start one more on the "procession to Rome." If Catholics as a whole will take this sympathetic attitude we may see something like a general movement in the direction of the Church. There are difficulties plenty in the matter of final adjustment, should such a movement occur, but once the large principle of unity, under the Divinely appointed center of unity is generally accepted, the rest is a matter of details. Centuries of estrangement, of calumnies, of persecutions, and revilings have made the ground hard. It is not easy to divest one's self of inherited prejudice, but the time has come when all lovers of "the truth as it is in Jesus" and in His Church must be willing to take the largest possible view of these things in the interest of that unity which we so ardently desire. The "procession to Rome" is already marching, but instead of a thin line of stragglers, it can and should be a mighty army. May it march in the confidence that a hearty welcome awaits it.

The conviction is growing among Catholic-minded Episcopalians that all who hold anything of a Catholic ideal must be united, and united under Rome, if they are to be able to withstand the assaults of a federated Protestantism, made haughty and aggressive by the tremendous amount of free advertising it has recently enjoyed, and determined that the enhanced prestige of things Catholic shall not be allowed to grow and prosper.

This proposed concordat between Episcopalians and Congregationalists will bring to a crisis the profession of their faith on the part of Episcopalians. Those who wish to be known as Catholics must sooner or later see that if they are to help win the Catholic cause, they must unite with the Catholic Church. There alone can they find that for which they are longing, there alone can their valiant fight really count, and there alone can they attain their soul's desire.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

More than six centuries ago a pious Belgian priest was on a pilgrimage to Rome. Stopping at the shrine of St. Cristina, at the lake of Bolseno, in Italy, he offered up Mass in the famous church. At the elevation of the Host he noticed drops of blood trickling down on the corporal. Alarmed at the sight, he left the altar. At the command of the Holy Father, who was at Orvieto with his court, the corporal and the Host were transferred to that city, with great solemnity, by the Bishop and the clergy. The Supreme Pontiff examined the corporal and Host, interrogated the priest, and then ordered both Host and corporal preserved in a local church. Scientific examination disclosed the fact that the drops on the corporal were real blood.

At this time there resided in Orvieto the saintly doctor, Thomas Aquinas. The Holy Father decided to institute a festival for the Church in honor of the miraculous occurrence that took place at Lake Bolseno. St. Thomas, at the command of the Pope, set about to compose a Mass and a divine office to accompany the festival. The people of Orvieto, proud of the possession of such wondrous relics, began the construction of a memorial church. The result of all this was that to-day we have throughout the world the feast of Corpus Christi, the Body of Our Lord, and Orvieto contains the precious relics in one of the finest churches in all Christendom.

Some years ago Pope Gregory XVI., the predecessor of Pius-IX., visited the little city. He was shown the relics which repose in a magnificent reliquary of solid gold, silver and precious stones. He examined the blood-stained corporal, and then broke off a small particle of the sacred Host, still preserved fresh and intact, and placed it in the fire. The tiny particle, under the effect of the fire, acted in the same manner as human

flesh. The Holy Father, dropping on his knees, at once incensed the Sacred Host, placed it back in the reliquary, and affixed the papal seal on the door of the tabernacle inclosing the Host.

Today the corporal is exposed to the veneration of the faithful at stated intervals. The blood stains

are still clear and fresh, and the reliquary, which weighs four hundred pounds, is carried by the clergy, in full vestments, throughout the city every year on the feast of Corpus Christi.—St. Paul Bulletin.

All news are swallow-winged, but what's good walks on crutches.

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