

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

GOD'S PRESENCE OUR SAFEGUARD

"The Lord is nigh. Be nothing solicitous," (Phil. iv. 6.)

There are many, otherwise very good people, my dear brethren, who spoil their lives by over-much solicitude, anxiety, and worry. Not that they are seeking wicked ends, but they allow worldly cares and family matters to absorb all their interest to such an extent that they scarcely have a thought left for Almighty God.

This is a great mistake, and a far greater evil than we imagine. Take it as a warning, worry spoils the happiness and joy of this life, ruins our health, and is a cause of unhappiness and discord in a family. And over-solicitude results in nothing. "The expectation of the solicitous shall perish," says the wise man. (Prov. xi. 7.) But regarded from a religious point of view this anxiety is an insult to Almighty God. He is the Provider, the Ruler, the Disposer, we must be ready to take things as He sends them. Is He not the Father to see after and provide for His children? Should this too great solicitude betoken doubt and fear of God's goodness and His providence. It is just the very opposite of that which St. Peter bids us do: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you." (1 Pet. v. 7.)

And this worldly solicitude is detrimental to, yea, subversive of all piety and devotion. At times we have all known what it is to try and say our prayers when overwhelmed with anxiety, doubt, and worry. The Evil One simply reveals in the myriad distractions that beset the prayers of the worried soul. There can be no recollection, no devotion. Preparation for Confession, seems to increase the trouble. We are discouraged, we put it off, and our frequent Communions fall away. We had thought that they would be such a consolation to us when we came to die; but, alas! how easy it is to abandon the good habit.

We must leave things to God. Too much worldly care will ruin us, for piety and devotion cannot co-exist with it in the same heart. If we must be solicitous, then let us be solicitous for our soul. Keep thyself and thy soul solicitously, carefully. (Deut. iv. 9.) Or, as the prophet tells us: "I will show thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee: Verily . . . to walk solicitously with thy God." (Mich. vi. 8.)—to walk mindful of God's Presence, mindful that He is regarding us, mindful that in all we do, we seek His honor, glory, and good pleasure. This solicitude is not worried and fretful, but is calm and blessed with the peace of God, which keeps our hearts in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And we are encouraged and helped to this keeping our soul and walking with God solicitously by the remembrance that "the Lord is nigh." These words have a special significance at Christmas-time—"the Lord is nigh." Yes, they are sweet to ponder over, and they give us great consolation, and they give us great solicitude and worthy of Him when He comes.

The Lord is nigh, yes, to hearken to our supplications and the cry of our heart. How blessed to believe and remember that! "You shall call upon Me . . . and you shall pray to Me, and I will hear you. You shall seek Me, and you shall find Me." (Jer. xxx. 12, 13.)

The Lord is nigh to succor us. "Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God, that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that, wherein He Himself hath suffered, He is able to succor them also that are tempted." (Heb. ii. 17, 18.) Recall those words: He is able to succor us when we are tempted, because He Himself has been tempted and has suffered. Let us bless the Lord and thank Him that He is nigh to succor us.

The Lord is nigh to console us. Our human nature, our shortcomings, are a source of distress to us many a time. We fail, we are weak, so unaccountably that we lose heart and grow despondent. We need consolation and comfort to keep on the way, to keep up to our task, our duty. If we were alone, we should be cowards and give up the good endeavour. But remember we are not alone. The Lord is nigh to console us; He is waiting to be asked. "My soul shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall be delighted in His salvation. . . . Lord, who is like to Thee?" (Ps. xxxiv. 9, 10.) "Give joy to the soul of the servant, for to Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul. For Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and a plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee. . . . Thou art great, and dost wonderful things; Thou art God alone." (Ps. lxxv. 4-10)

"The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him. . . . He will do the will of them that fear Him; He will hear their prayer and save them." (Ps. cxliv. 18, 19.)

The Lord is nigh to hearken to us, to succor us, to console us—yes, and nigh to reward us. Before we well know that we have cast off worldly cares and anxieties, that we have begun earnestly "to keep our souls" and "walk solicitously with God," the end will be here. Life is very brief. It seems only one continued good beginning. "Be you patient and strengthen your heart, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." (Jas. v. 7, 9.) The Lord is

nigh, indeed, to reward us, for the reward begins in this world. It begins, indeed, as soon as we really and genuinely start to walk solicitously with God; for the peace of God then dwells in and guards our hearts. That peace of God is the token that the Lord is nigh. Oh, what a contrast to the misery when worldly cares usurped the whole of our hearts and minds! That peace is the breath of the Lord as He graciously bends over us, hearkening, succoring, consoling, and whispering to us of the reward to come.

FREEDOM OF CREED IS FRUIT OF CONQUEST

SAYS NOTED ENGLISH CATHOLIC AUTHORITY

The presence of the British Ecclesiastical Mission in Chicago centered considerable attention upon various phases of the conquest of the Holy Land by the Allied Armies. Mr. Stapleton Barnes, of the Commission had brought to his attention while in the city, a statement made some months ago by Cardinal Legue. The Irish prelate stated that not only are large sums of money for relief of Holy Land sufferers entirely in the hands of Protestants, but that they are being used by the latter for proselytizing purposes. Food and clothing are bestowed, and work-rooms where women and girls can earn some money, are opened, for Protestants first and Greek Schismatics next, while Catholics are assisted last, or often refused assistance unless they come and join in the Protestant prayers in the work-shops.

PROTESTANT FUNDS

Mr. Barnes stated that the funds dispersed for this relief in Palestine are administered independently, with no connection with the British government. Moreover, the moneys dispersed for such relief are collected in America and contributed mainly by Protestant Americans.

Coincidental with the arrival in Chicago of the British Ecclesiastical Mission, was received a special interview which was given in London to the correspondent of the New World by Col. Sir Mark Sykes, Bart., M.P., who directs the eastern affairs of the British Government. Sir Mark Sykes was, according to information volunteered by Mr. Barnes, requested to join the English delegation in its visit to this country, but pressing affairs of state prohibited this at the last moment.

Mr. H. C. Watts, London correspondent of the New World, describes his interview with Sir Sykes, as follows:

The newboys along Whitehall were going by, shouting out the latest reports of the driving out of the Turk from the Holy Land. In a cavernous room, somewhere amid the solemn and interminable corridors of the British House of Commons, Col. Sir Mark Sykes was speaking about the significance of the liberation of Palestine by the British Armies under Gen. Sir Edmund Allenby.

Sir Mark Sykes speaks of the eastern question from his own personal knowledge. He has travelled extensively in the Turkish Provinces of Asia and he has served as Honorary attaché at Constantinople. The results of his travels and experiences are to be found in the seven volumes that appear under his name, all dealing with the Turkish dominion in the East.

In the Boer War, Sir Mark Sykes served through the entire campaign with the 3rd Battalion of the Yorkshire Militia, and the two blue chevrons on the right cuff of his service tunic are the outward token that he has served two years overseas with the British forces in the present War.

NO NEW CRUSADE

The Turk had just been cleared out of Nazareth, and was in full flight across the Jordan, and Sir Mark was asked whether the present occupation of the Holy Land by the British forces could, with any degree of accuracy, be said to be the final achievement of the task the Crusaders set out to accomplish. His answer was emphatic, and negative. The war is not a Crusade, and the Turk has not been driven out because he is an unbeliever, but simply because he is the Turk.

"The liberation of Palestine by the British armies," Sir Mark said, "has nothing whatever to do with the driving out of one religion, and its displacement by another. What it means, briefly, is that the Holy Land has changed hands in circumstances entirely different to any that have prevailed hitherto."

"There is, actually, no similarity whatever between the action that has just taken place, and the events that happened centuries ago. Palestine has changed hands, that is all! It has changed hands before, but the conditions were entirely different. In the Babylonian times the land was invaded, the Jews driven into exile, and when the days of their captivity were over they were allowed to return. That process of changing hands meant that the nation was driven out from its fatherland."

"It changed hands again in Graeco-Roman times, when the conquerors established themselves and the people were dispersed. Since that time Palestine has passed from one domination to another. Byzantines established themselves there, and they gave place to the Arabs. The Crusaders held it, and from them it passed to the Moslems, who in turn yielded it to the Mameluk, who lost it to the Turk. The process went on,

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The Turk gave way to the Egyptian, and the Egyptian to the French.

"Sometimes Palestine was taken by one race from another; by one religion from another religion; by one imperial power from another imperial power. But now we have seen happen to Palestine what has never happened before. It has not been conquered, nor has it been invaded, as the term is generally understood. With the free consent of its whole population, a consent which I may say has been given without a single exception, it has been occupied by the forces of civilization and liberty in the name of freedom and humanity."

"And that is why I say that it is not the final achievement of the Crusades. Nor is the liberation of Palestine an imperialistic victory, nor is it a national triumph. Though it has in it something of those things."

"It is not a victory of one creed over another creed, of one race over another race, nor of one government over another government. It is the fulfilment of the Crusades in so far as the essential purposes of the Crusades have been accomplished. That is that the Holy Places are safe and religious freedom is guaranteed."

"The clearing out of the Turk from Palestine is a matter of great satisfaction to both Christians and Jews. This satisfaction is equally shared by every Moslem, for each one of his holy places is preserved inviolate, and every wakf, that is, a pious bequest made by devout Moslems for charitable purposes, is now secure from the rapacious inroads of an alien and corrupt bureaucracy. The Arabic language, which in the language of the people, is no longer proscribed in the schools, and the Moslem is now able to plead his cause in court before a judge who understands his language."

"The Palestine Arab, whether he is a Christian or a Moslem, now enjoys a freedom that was unknown to him before; his liberty is safeguarded in every way. If Saladin were alive today, he would have been found riding at the right hand of Gen. Allenby, like those noble Emirs who recently entered Damascus, riding in company with the British forces."

"The most significant thing about the victory of Gen. Allenby is that it is at once the realization of the ideal of Judas Maccabaeus, of Khaled, the Sword of God, and of Godfroi de Bouillon. The essential things these three great heroes strove for have been realized in this crowning victory of Gen. Allenby. It brings to pass the realization of the ideal that Palestine should afford not only a national home for the Jewish people, but also a spiritual focus for the Hebrew national ideal."

"Another result of the clearing of the enemy from Palestine will be that the way is open for the spread of the Arabic civilization, which in ancient times radiated science, art and literature from its capital at Damascus from the Pillars of Hercules to the Wall of China."

"Christianism sees in the event a victory for those elements which were represented by the orthodoxy of Heraklaeus, the enthusiasm of St. Bernard, and the devotion to the Gospel of Wiclif and John Bunyan. The Englishman feels a national pride when he considers that the great event has been brought to pass by an Englishman, with the consent and approval and co-operation of every one of our Allies, on behalf of the whole of mankind."

"The Irishman, too, has his share in the pride of this achievement, when he learns that the keystone in the arch of Turkish resistance was broken by the Infantry corps under the command of that gallant Catholic Irishman, Maj.-Gen. Bullfin, who might have been seen kneeling at the midnight Mass in the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, last Christmas, the first Christmas since 1186 when the Christian soldier, armed and spurred, stood a conqueror on the threshold of that ancient and holy place."

"There are some people who see in the events of our times the fulfilment of prophecy. For them there is this amazing consideration. On the 28th of September of this year a battle was fought on the Field of Armageddon. Those who took part in this battle were Jews, Arabs, Englishmen, Irishmen, Scotsmen, Welshmen, Frenchmen, Italians, Indians, Egyptians and Armenians, Negroes from the British West Indies and

South Africa. There were South Africans, Australians and New Zealanders all arrayed against Germans, Austrians and the Turk."

"The great battle is not won yet, though its end comes more and more in sight as the days pass. But there is this to consider. It is possible that on the plain of Armageddon there were fired the first shots of that final battle whose front stretches from Flanders to Vladivostok.—Chicago New World.

SUNRISE IN BELGIUM

From the Belfry of Bruges

In the market place of Bruges stands the belfry old and brown. Thrice consumed and thrice rebuilt still it watches o'er the town.

As the summer morn was breaking, I stood, And the world threw off its darkness, like the weeds of widowhood.

Not a sound rose from the city at that early morning hour, But I heard a heart of iron beating in the ancient tower.

I beheld the Flemish weavers, with Namur and Juliers bold, Marching homeward from the bloody battle of the Spurs of Gold.

Saw the flight at Minnewater, saw the White Hoods moving west, Saw the great Arkelvilde victorious scale the Golden Dragon's Nest.

And again the whistled Spaniard all the land with terror smote; And again the wild alarm sounded from the tectin's throat;

Till the bell of Ghent responded o'er lagoon and dike of sand: "I am Roland! I am Roland! there is victory in the land!"

Then the sound of drums aroused me The awakened city's roar Chased the phantoms I had summoned back into their graves once more.

Hours had passed away like minutes; and before I was aware, Lo! the shadow of the belfry crossed the sun illumined square.

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW

THE HAND OF THE LORD

Many devout French people have not been slow to discern the hand of the Lord in the glorious triumph that has attended their four years of heroic and bloody sacrifice. They recall Joan of Arc. If she is not an instrument of the supernatural powers what is she? She is that or nothing.

As the struggle dragged on, the over-anxious saw, or fancied they saw evidences of the divine interference. Many of these visions vanished with the night of their nativity. They were without foundation outside of the overwrought imagination of those who embodied them in speech. Nevertheless, now that the smoke of battle is cleared away, a few things remain who believe that Jehovah has not entirely forsaken the Eldest Daughter of the Church.

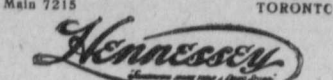
They will remember with thanksgiving to the God of Armies that their Generalissimo is a devout and faithful worshipper of the Most High. They will remember that he frequently partakes of the Bread of the Strong, and that when the conflict was raging, he found time to go apart and seek counsel and strength before the Tabernacle. They will remember that 50,000 English children united their pure petitions with the great and endless volume of supplications which ascended daily to the Heavens from the devout worshippers before 10,000 French altars.

They will remember, and write it in their books, that representatives of Germany signed the armistice on the eleventh day of November—the Feast of their very dear and much cultivated St. Martin of Tours. They will not forget that this great patron was himself a soldier, and as such, even though translated to the Kingdom of Pesce, he is necessarily interested in the wars of his country. They will tell their children how the great St. Martin once made use of his sword in discharging the office of Christian charity and that before he himself had been admitted to the company of the elect.

The children of France will learn that once upon a cold and gusty day, the young soldier met a beggar without the gates of Amiens, and drawing his sword he divided his military cloak and gave half of it to the shivering stranger. They will learn that when night had closed on the city the Lord appeared to the young pagan and pronounced his approval of the noble deed that he had performed in favor of the unknown beggar: "Martin, while yet a catechumen, has clothed me with his cloak."

The age of overt miracles has passed away; but the Lord, He is God, and He is Almighty, and He still takes cognizance of the doings of men. He does not always conform His interpositions to the plans of men; nor does He hold Himself bound to make good the vain boasts of those who pretend to a special and exclusive alliance with Him. He prefers to act in His own good time, in His own way, and under the inspiration of His own infinite wisdom. But however and whenever He acts He is adorable and His benefits are to be received with humility unfeigned and with thanksgiving unceasing.—Catholic Transcript.

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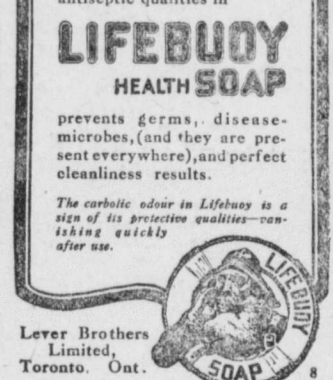
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