

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTE-
COST

CELIBACY

"And having brought their ships to land, leaving
all things, they followed him." (St. Luke V, 11)

Peter, according to the Biblical narrative, was the only one of the twelve apostles who was married. After his call to the apostolate, he left all things, including his family relationship, and followed Jesus. The other apostles also left "all things" and followed Him. It could not be truly said that the apostles left "all things" to follow Jesus if they continued their relationship with wife or family.

The priest is a man who sacrifices himself for the people. In imitation of the apostles, he left "all things" to follow Jesus and in accordance with the teaching of Jesus Christ and St. Paul that virginity is a higher state than matrimony, the Catholic priest leaves "all things," practices mortification and leads a life of celibacy in order to devote himself entirely to work for God and humanity.

It is said that the life of the priest is a hard and lonely one and, moreover, that it is unscriptural. Let us see. That his life is a hard one is certain. His path is by no means one of roses; it is rather one of thorns. The young man knows this well before he enters it. He willingly enters it with a full knowledge of its duties and responsibilities. He knows well that it is a life of trials and crosses. He knows, too, that the whole life of Jesus Christ from the stable of Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary's heights was one of continuous trials, crosses, mortifications and that the life of every follower—especially every minister—of Jesus Christ should be fashioned after that of His Divine Model. "If any man will come after Me," He says in the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew, "Let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me."

The disciple, the minister of Christ, is not above his Master; and it is not becoming that the path of the disciple should be covered with flowers, while that of the Master was strewn with thorns and sprinkled with His own precious blood. Yes; the priest's life is a difficult one. But, the more difficult it is—the more trials he has to endure—the more he resembles Jesus Christ, His Model; and if he bears those trials which he shares with his Master here with a proper spirit, the more certain he is of sharing a happy eternity with Him hereafter.

Few questions are more clearly defined in Holy Scripture than that of religious celibacy.

St. Paul in the seventh chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians says: "I would have you without solicitude. He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God; but, he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. And the unmarried about the things of the Lord, how she may be holy in body and spirit. But she that is married thinketh about the things of the world, how she may please her husband." Therefore, he concluded, "He that giveth his virgin in marriage doth well, and he who giveth her not, doth better." Could language be clearer? Marriage is good; celibacy better. "He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God." This teaching of St. Paul is the teaching of the Church—that marriage is honorable; but that there is a holier state for those who are called by the grace of God to embrace it.

Religious celibacy is one of the principal causes which strengthen Catholic priest and missionary to undergo all dangers, overcome all obstacles, face all terrors and expose himself to death in its most disgusting form in time of plague for the sake of his fellowman.

You are all acquainted with the fact that hundreds of priests and sisters voluntarily nursed the sick and dying during the yellow-fever scourge in the south at the risk of their own lives. Do you think they would have done so had they had families? No; they would have cared about the things of the world.

The venerable and saintly Bishop of Natchez, like the humblest of his priests, went from house to house administering to his flock. Finally, he himself took the yellow fever and for some time his life was despaired of. Twice was it reported that he died. But God had other work for him to do.

There is an island in the Pacific Ocean (the island of Molokai) whose inhabitants are lepers.

Leprosy is a loathsome disease that in a short time covers the whole body and makes it disgusting to behold. By the Old Law lepers were compelled to separate themselves from the rest of mankind and cry "Unclean."

To minister to the wants of the poor, unfortunate lepers living on this island, a certain priest went some time ago. After a few years, this charitable priest, who was endeavoring to imitate his Divine Model, was afflicted with this dreadful disease and died. He slowly and inevitably died by inches among those people for whose salvation he would become a martyr. Other priests and religious willingly took his place.

Think you they would have done so, had they had families depending upon them?

The greatest of benefactions is to devote one's life to alleviate the suffering of mankind. Christ said: "Greater love than this no man hath that a man lay down his life for his friends."

This good priest is ever ready to do. Although death stares him in the face, he never shrinks from his post of duty, never abandons his flock, while there is a wound to heal, a soul to save.

When his duty calls him, he is not afraid of death because as St. Paul says: "He who is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord."

GENERAL INTENTION
FOR JUNERECOMMENDED AND BLESSED
BY HIS HOLINESS PIUS X.

THE DECREE ON FREQUENT COMMUNION

Holy Communion is so essential in our lives as Catholics and so necessary in the spiritual combat we are engaged in, in this valley of tears, that we cannot learn too much about this source of grace, or about its effects, on our souls. Since the publication of the Papal Decree, *Sacra Tridentina Synodus*, in 1905, pastors and religious educators have been continually deepening our instruction. They have explained more fully the dogmatic aspect of Eucharist; they have multiplied motives to strengthen our will and stimulate our desire for the frequent reception of it; and they are still earnestly urging us to weigh the results of this Sacrament on ourselves in fruits of grace and sanctity. So persistent are they in their zealous teaching that we should hardly have thought it worth while to go over the ground again, merely to restate obvious truths, had not the Decree itself been proposed for the General Intention of the present month. We must therefore, recall the outstanding features of the salutary legislation of 1905, so that our readers may not plead ignorance of its aims or its teaching.

The Holy Father tells us therein that no one who is in the state of grace (that is, who is not conscious of mortal sin) and who has a right and devout intention (that is, who is actuated primarily by a supernatural motive) should be deprived of the privilege of receiving frequent, even daily, Communion. This direction is consoling; it makes the approach to the holy table easier than it commonly was in former times. St. Francis of Sales in his *Devout Life*, a work that has spiritualized many a life in the past two hundred years, taught that to communicate weekly it was necessary to be without mortal sin, without affection to venial sin, and to have a greater desire for Communion; but that to receive daily it was necessary, besides this, to have overcome the greater part of our evil inclinations and to act under the advice of a confessor.

This discipline, unnecessarily severe, is the one that was usually taught by moralists, even up to recent years. Learned professors exhausted their analytical acumen in gauging the various states of soul required for the frequency or infrequency of reception of Holy Communion. They were so dogmatic in their assertiveness and their authority was so highly thought of that no one, relying on his own lights, felt inclined to contradict them or to act contrary to their decisions. But eight years ago the Holy Father interposed. With one stroke of his pen he swept away their subtle distinctions and laid down instead the two simple conditions mentioned above. Before he took such a radical step, he had evidently convinced himself that the fears of the moralists were groundless, and that the frequent and even daily reception of Communion by Catholics generally would not open the door to laxity, levity, or irreverence.

True pastor of his flock and determined to "restore all things in Christ," Pius X. saw that one of his great duties was to strengthen human souls. He knew that while the Holy Eucharist should always be accepted as a pledge and symbol of unity, and as an object of adoration, something so Catholic was disposed to question, there were other aspects that should be insisted upon, namely, that the frequent reception of the Eucharist is also a source of strength in trial and temptation, a fountain of sanctifying grace and holy charity, and that for this reason it should never have ceased to be the frequent, even daily, food of our souls.

In the early ages of the Church the practice of frequent Communion was general, and when the Fathers of Trent legislated in this matter, urging even daily Communion they were merely insisting on a return to former discipline. There is no doubt that the action of the Council would have had its effect on souls in subsequent years, had not the insidious Jansenist heresy appeared to neutralize its efforts. This heresy, one of the most dangerous that ever sprang up to trouble the Church, insisted, under the guise of reverence for the greatness of the Sacrament, on dispositions of soul so rigorous and so difficult to secure that few felt they could succeed. It was this baneful error that, under a splendor of liturgy and a demonstration of outward devotion, averted the multitude. The majesty of God was presented to them in a way that overshadowed His goodness; fear took the place of love and kept the faithful away from the Holy Table.

RHEUMATISM KEPT
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SEPT. 30th, 1910

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There are few of the present generation who have reached middle life who do not recall the sum of anxious preparation their God-fearing fathers and mothers imposed on themselves for their one or two Communion a year. Notwithstanding their strong faith and their time-honored piety they approached the altar, usually at Christmas and Easter, with a formality, a fear, a scrupulosity that must have seriously interfered with the union of their souls with God.

The present generation of Catholics are having a different experience. It is generally admitted that devotion to the Sacred Heart has had more to do in modern times with the rooting out of the Jansenist spirit and with the frequenting of the Sacraments than any other agency. It made the practice of monthly and weekly Communion popular; it cultivated Communion of devotion; it made souls love God rather than fear Him. The result was that personal love for God, love shorn of all superfluous formalism, drew souls to Him. "Love for love" became implicitly the shibboleth of Catholics.

But this was not enough. The Divine Master had long ago told us that "His Flesh is meat indeed, and His Blood is drink indeed, and that if any man would eat this Food he should live forever." The faithful of this age could not have too much of the Food that giveth eternal life, and the Decree of 1905 urging frequent and daily Communion appeared to complete the work begun by the spread of devotion to the Sacred Heart.

It is only seven years since this important Decree was published and already its salutary fruits, especially among the rising generation, are beginning to be recognized. A few years hence the practice of frequent and daily Communion will be as popular as it was in the early centuries, when the faithful used to keep the Blessed Sacrament in their own homes. Thanks to the zeal of our present Pontiff, the barriers to frequent Communion have been let down, the obstacles have been thrown aside the way has been made easier, the preparation for Communion has been simplified, the rigorous conditions imposed by moralists have been superseded by other simpler ones, applicable to all men of good will, namely, freedom from mortal sin and a pure intention. What more could our Holy Father do to draw his children to the Eucharistic Banquet?

And yet when we analyze those two conditions fully, we shall see that they do not exclude the reverence that we should have in the reception in this Greatest of Gifts. No one who appreciates all that Holy Communion means to him, will fail to perceive what is required of him; he will none the less prepare himself by putting away worldliness and worldly concerns from his mind; he will cease his uncharitableness, his sensual indulgence, his dishonesty, and pride; he will be more prone to give time to prayer, and reflection, and solitude of



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heart, as a preparation for Holy Communion. The reverence that is shown along these lines is quite enough, and the reception of the Eucharist will, in the words of the Holy Father, "enable the faithful to derive strength to resist their passions, to cleanse themselves from stain of daily faults, and to avoid those greater sins to which human frailty is liable."

Naturally, we must reverence with all the powers of our soul, the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Our Lord, but our reverence must not be Jansenistic; it must not prevent us from receiving daily, or frequently, or at least as often as we can. The Church will safeguard all external expressions of reverence that may be needed; she asks her children to show the interior reverence that is outlined in the two conditions mentioned above. If this is done all will be well.

It may seem superfluous to mention these simple matters to people who are devout to the Sacred Heart. No lover of the Heart of Jesus will receive Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin; no one will approach the altar with any other motive than that of desire to profit by this great act. We all know that God does not want to shut Himself up in His inaccessible glory; we are fully aware that His delight is to be with the children of men, to live with the poor and the simple, with the meek and humble of heart, as He did two thousand years ago, in the byways of Judea.

What confidence and love, therefore, we should show in going to Communion frequently, and if we have misfortune to fall into mortal sin, how quickly we should rise again and keep on moving upward. Advancement in holiness does not consist in being exempt from temptation, but in striving manfully against them. We may fall frequently, and yet by repentance and sacramental grace gain ground all the time. Even repeated mortal sins, if sincerely atoned for and washed out by absolution, are not incompatible with a gradual advance in essential perfection. How consoling all these considerations are! And how unavailing are the excuses so many Catholics make in their attempts to justify their long absence from the altar rail.

Let us hope that the invitation extended to our League throughout the world, during the present month, may persuade God-fearing Catholics to throw off their timidity and receive the Bread of Life often. They must surely know that if they have been backward or scrupulous in adopting the practice of frequent Communion, it is not too late to make up for lost time; there are still many precious graces in store for them in this life. If they persevere in their pious practice until it becomes a habit they will have the ineffable consolation of knowing that when the hour of death arrives, they are on the threshold of eternal life. It is at that supreme moment that the words of Our Lord shall appeal to them in their most obvious meaning: "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

E. J. DEVINE, S. J.

SUSTENTATION FUND

HAS BEEN STARTED FOR CALDEY ISLAND CONVERTS TO MEET LOSSES

In announcing the opening of a Caldey sustentation fund, Dom John Chapman, O. S. B., and Dom Bede Camm, O. S. B., inform the public that the converted Anglican monks have already suffered severe financial loss by their conscientious action. "We happen to know," declared the distinguished Benedictines, "that they have lost the sum of not less than \$100,000, which was promised to them for various benefactors this year, principally for the completion of their buildings."

Though there is reasonable hope that in a few years the resources of Caldey Island will have developed so as to render the community self-supporting—the monks depend largely on the produce of their poultry farm, their quarries, marble works, etc.—the immediate financial position is one of much difficulty. The students of Maynooth College have offered to get up a subscription among themselves, for they express themselves resolved that the monks of Caldey shall not want. A priest has most generously offered \$2,500 as the nucleus of the sustentation fund.—Church Progress.

LATE FOR MASS

To many Catholics the Mass is divided into two parts: "The end of the first Gospel is the line of demarcation. Conscientious Catholics who confess that they have been 'late for Mass' present a problem to the conscientious confessor. He must ascertain if the person who was 'late for Mass' was so late as not to have heard Mass at all. His questioning generally brings the further information that the tardy attendant was or was not in church before the first Gospel had been finished.

There are three essential parts of the Mass: The Offertory, the Consecration, and the Communion. These being essential parts of the Mass must be effected at the one and same Mass which the conscientious Catholic will be scrupulous in attending on Sundays and holidays of obligation. If a person comes into church after the Offertory, or leaves before the Communion, he has not heard Mass and has, therefore, not fulfilled his obligation.

PRESIDENT
SUSPENDER

NONE SO EASY

In order to fulfil to the letter the precept of hearing Mass, a person should be present from the very beginning and remain to the very end. From this obligation has arisen a custom which necessitates another word of caution. It is true that, if we have missed the preliminary prayers of the Mass we may supply for the defect by attending so much of a second Mass as had been missed at the first. If a person should arrive at and should remain for the second Mass up to the time of the Consecration, he would not have fulfilled his obligation, irrespective of the time he had remained in church, since he had been present at no one Mass in its essential entirety.

If a person goes to Mass and discovers that the chalice has been uncovered, he may be assured that he will have to hear all of another Mass. He will have been so late that no supplying of deficiency will satisfy the obligation that he has of hearing Mass.—Intermountain Catholic.

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