

FIVE-MINUTE SERMONS.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

ERRONEOUS VIEWS OF VOCATION.

As a prisoner in the Lord, I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called. (Eph. iv. 1.)

Brethren, has it ever occurred to you that each one of us has a vocation in this life? I refer not to our Christian vocation, which we all have in common, but to the particular state of life to which each one of us has been called. It is not an uncommon error for people to think that priests and nuns are the only privileged mortals who are called by God to some special work, and that to their vocation alone God has attached peculiar and extraordinary graces.

This is an error we must correct. We have all—thank God!—the vocation to be Christians and the call to be saints, but we have, moreover, our own special calling, suitable to our character and disposition, and our common Christian vocation; and in a great measure our eternal salvation, depends on our fulfilling worthily the particular vocation in which we are called.

Some of us God has called to be priests, to serve continually at His altar. Some to be fathers of families, and others to remain single all their life. Some He has called to the higher professions, and others to the hard but manly toil of every-day life. But to all these vocations, to all these different states of life, He has attached certain duties, peculiar obligations, which must be met and fulfilled.

The great danger, brethren, that we have to avoid is the common and stupid error of those who hold that their every-day vocation has nothing to do with this Sunday calling; that there is little, if any, connection between their own special calling and their general calling to be Christians; who maintain that as business men, they can and must act in their own business-like way, banishing God from their hearts and His law from their lives, at least during their hours of business.

This error, stupid as it is, is not so uncommon as one might at first imagine. Take a few practical cases. How many are there who, when they examine their conscience, ever think of questioning themselves upon the duties of their position in life? How many fathers of families, listening to these words to-day, question themselves daily as to how they govern those whom God has put under their charge; how they watch and provide for the spiritual and temporal welfare of those whom they are called upon to support? How many young men ever think of asking themselves how they have fulfilled the obligations they are under to parents, now perhaps unable to take care of themselves? How many business men question themselves as to the honesty or propriety of this or that mode of action they have been following? Alas! they are few indeed. And this is the practical outcome of not recognizing the close connection there is between our every-day calling and our Christian vocation.

As every vocation, brethren, has its duties and its difficulties, so every calling has its special helps and graces. God saw each one of us from all eternity—just as we are to-day, with all the weaknesses of our character, with all the difficulties that surround us, and all the temptations with which we have to contend. He foresaw all these things, and provided for them, regulating His helps and graces according to our wants, and directing all things towards our final destiny. His grace is always sufficient for us, and as long as we remain in His friendship there is no vocation or calling so difficult or trying but what can be cheerfully and manfully borne and worked towards our soul's salvation. The lot of some is certainly not an easy one, but God always fits the back for the burden.

The practical question I would have you ask yourselves to-day, brethren, is this: granted that I have a vocation in this life; granted that Providence has placed me in a position that involves duties and obligations to God, my neighbor, or myself; how am I fulfilling these obligations? How am I walking in the vocation in which I am called? Worthily or unworthily—that is all the important question for me to answer to-day to the satisfaction of my conscience, as I will have to answer it one day to Almighty God.

Am I the father or mother of a family? If so, do I discharge the duties of my calling? Do I make my home pleasant and agreeable for my children? Do I supply them with suitable home amusements? Do I furnish them proper reading matter, or do I allow them to waste their time and ruin their souls with the vile penny literature of the day? Do I oblige them to come to Mass and approach the sacraments, while I neglect these duties myself? Or am I a business man who deals squarely and honestly with my neighbors, never on the alert to take advantage of the ignorant and weak? Am I in the employment of others, and, if so, do I fulfil my calling worthily by doing all that strict justice or Christian charity requires of me? Or am I just to men who work for me? These are some of the questions regarding your vocations that I would have you ask yourselves to-day.

Brethren, when we come to render our account to God, be sure of this: He will not trouble us with the question as to whether we have been experts in our respective professions, whether we have been successful business-men or skilled mechanics; no, but whether we have been just and honorable, whether we have walked worthily in the vocations to which we have been called. Walk, then, brethren,

ren, worthy of your vocation, worthy of the Church which has reared you, worthy of the hope that is in you, worthy of the name you bear, that of Christ, who has redeemed you. Imitate Him, live as He lived, and suffer in your calling the things He suffered. Then the prayer of our patron, St. Paul, will not be in vain, and we will walk worthy of the vocation in which we are called.

DAN.

A Story for Boys.

By MARY D. BRINE.

"Why shouldn't they feel pain as much as you and I, Dan? They're only bugs, to be sure, but in proportion to their size they can feel and suffer just as we do. And yet the poor things can't defend themselves, if great giants, like boys and girls, come along and worry them with sticks and stones, and call it fun, as Bill did when he made a helpless little bug out of you, Dan, my boy."

Dan looked soberly at his little twig, and then threw it far away. "I didn't mean to hurt the bug. I didn't know it hurt 'em, you see, ma'am. Lots of folks does it, and sometimes I've ketch'd butterflies an' tied a hair round their wings to see 'em try to fly. Did that hurt 'em, do you s'pose?"

Viola looked graver than ever. "Oh, Dan, Dan!" she cried, shaking her head; then, as a thought came quickly, she added, "Come here a minute, close to me," and as he stood at her side, she rapidly threw about his arms a thick, long veil which had been about her shoulders. Very closely she drew the little arms till they were pinioned tightly at the boy's side, and he stood a helpless captive almost before he had realized her intention.

"There now," she laughingly said, "fly away, little butterfly; stretch your wings, and fly away!" Dan began to laugh, too, as he tried to wriggle his arms free from the veil and its meshes. "I shan't poke any more bugs!" he exclaimed, "an' I won't tie any more butterflies. I didn't think it would make 'em feel so bad, you see; but I know now, fast 'nough."

Then, when he was released, and sitting beside her again, Viola explained to him the wrong that lies in all kinds of teasing. "It isn't that boys mean to be cruel," she said, "but it seems like fun, and they do not realize that the dear Lord made the dumb brutes and insects with as much loving care for their comfort as He feels for us, who, of course, are still dearer in His sight, because we have souls, and can one day go and live with Him. And because we are so strong, and wise, and can take care of ourselves so well, you know, God means that we shall also take care of His dumb creatures, and be kind to them, and make them happy. Don't you see, Dan, that my advice to you is wise?"

Dan nodded Yes, and Viola went on: "There is another thing you should remember, too, Dan, my boy, and that is—God will sooner or later punish cruel people. He always makes them suffer in one way or another for the sufferings they cause, because He has expressly told us in the Bible that we must be kind to one another."

Dan looked up eagerly. "Do you s'pose, ma'am, that He'll punish Bill an' his mean lot for teasin' me, if I am only 'Dan,' an' the 'little Injun' they think ain't any good; do you think He'll punish them, Miss Viola?"

"They'll come to grief some day, no doubt, Dan, if they don't leave off their bad ways. But, now, I have kept you too long from your errand, and you must pick up your cart and hurry on with the wash for Mrs. Howe."

"Could you tell me the time, please, ma'am?" asked the boy, in no haste to leave the pretty young girl who seemed so kind, and who was fast winning his lonely young heart.

Viola looked at the tiny watch hung from her side. Dan thought it the most beautiful thing he had ever seen, and wondered if his mammy would one day have a watch to hang at her side, and dangle with a lot of little fancy things which looked like tiny toys. She should surely have them all if he could hurry and grow a man and make money for her.

"It is just 11 o'clock," said Viola; "are you very late?"

"The boy settled contentedly back on the grass. "Oh, no, ma'am!" he answered. "Mammy told me if I got back by 12, I'd be time enough, an' I can take these things to Mrs. Howe's in a jiffy, you see; she lives near here. So I can stay a bit longer, if you're willin', Miss Viola."

Miss Viola did not mind having Dan's company as long as he could rightly stay with her, so the boy kept his curled-up position on the grass at her feet, and she began questioning again.

"How about school, Dan?"

"I don't go to school any more," he said, while a flush rose to his cheeks. "I went to the Hill school over yonder once, but the fellers they nagged me all the time an' called me names, an' I got so mad I fighted 'em hard, an' hit 'em enough to hurt sometimes, too, if I am a little feller. But the teacher she always said I was the one what was the mostest to blame an' licked me more'n she licked the other boys, an' mammy said 'twasn't fair, an' so—an' so I didn't go any more."

"But surely, Dan, you're not going to be content to grow up an ignorant sort of man, are you?"

"Does nigerant mean stupid, miss?"

"Yes; quite stupid, little boy," was the smiling reply; "and I don't think

you look at all like that kind of a boy."

Dan lifted his head proudly. "I ain't goin' to be nigerant then. My mammy she can read an' write, an' she spells me a little every day, an' I can write on my slate words as long as—oh, as long as Washin' ton."

Viola laughed again. "That's good, Dan, for a beginning; and how about arithmetic?"

"Well, I can add a little, an' mammy she makes me keep on trying sums like when I was at school. She says I'm big enough to be in surtrack-shun now."

"Subtraction," Dan, corrected Viola, drawing a little paper from her pocket. "Come, now, we'll have a little lesson just now, all by ourselves. See, here are four chocolates left from some I had a while ago. Now, if I tell you to eat two of them, how many will be left in the paper?"

"Two!" cried Dan, feeling very clever.

"And if I eat the other two, then what?"

"The paper, miss!" yelled Dan, his brown eyes full of twinkles.

"And if I take away the paper?" laughed Viola, drawing it out of sight.

"Only jus' a recklerckshun of somethin' good," replied Dan, shrugging his shoulders, and feeling his mouth water for those chocolates.

"Oh, you're a funny fellow!" cried the young lady; "here, now, eat the four chocolates, and then go and do your errand, and when you go home tell mammy you're going to be a very clever man some fine day."

Dan looked delighted. "Ho! I thought you was goin' to give me a harder arithmetic lesson than that. I likes chocolate arithmetic first-rate."

Miss Viola gathered her materials together and started for the house, but paused a moment to say to Dan, who was reluctantly lifting the handle of his little cart:

"See here, my boy, I live right over there, in that white house, see? Well, if I should want you to do an errand for me some day, or for somebody in the house at any time, could you be trusted to do it faithfully, and like a man of honor? If I am going to help you earn money for your mother, you must let me trust you, Dan, and feel sure that you will always do your best about whatever you are called upon to do for another."

"You may jus' trust Dan Carmen to try an' please you, ma'am," replied the boy, gratefully.

"Oh, but that isn't the question, dear. You must try to do right for right's sake, and not only to please somebody you like, you know."

Dan looked serious. "Tain't always easy to want to please some folks, ma'am. There's folks in this village I jus' most hate, —mammy won't let me hate 'em as much as I want to, 'cause it's wicked to hate, she says, but I—'m as near it as anythin' I can be, Miss Viola, an' if I did errands for 'em, they'd likely cheat me out of fair pay, an' call me names, too."

"Oh, dear me!" said Viola; "you poor little fellow, I'll try to help you to a better opinion of your neighbors as time goes on."

"Well, a feller that gets snubbed and kicked about like I do, can't help thinkin' queer things, you see," said Dan; and looking at Miss Viola quizzically and half seriously, he asked, "Were you—I don't s'pose, now, you were ever knocked down, Miss Viola?"

The young lady laughed so merrily at this that a little lad came to the door of the house opposite and looked out curiously.

"I can't say, Dan, that I have ever had such an experience," replied Viola.

"Well, then, miss, you can't come anywhere near knowin' how it riles a feller, an' makes him bad, even if he wasn't settin' out to be so at first."

Just then a piping little voice called: "Hello, Miss Vi, what you laughing at?"

Viola turned in the direction of the little figure at the door and replied: "Oh, Bennie, did you hear me, you rogue? Come here a moment, I want you."

A boy of about eight years ran down the piazza steps, and as far as the gate, which he climbed, and, boy-like, sat swinging back and forth. As he swung he sang gaily:

"Oh, if I were President of these United States, I'd eat molasses candy, and I'd swing upon the gates."

"But a very foolish kind of President you'd make, my lad, I'm sure," laughed Viola. "Come here to me, I want you; that's a good boy."

Dan meanwhile stared at the newcomer with much interest. He saw a handsome little boy whose golden hair fell down below his shoulders, and who was dressed in a white flannel suit, the prettiest, Dan thought, that he had ever seen. The loose waist had a broad collar trimmed with blue braid. Around the waist was a broad blue sash with fringed ends. The little knickerbocker legs were clad in black silk stockings, and the soft blue silk fringe at the ends of the sash hung below the knees and dangled against those restless legs continually. Dan wondered if ever he would be able to wear such wonderful sort of clothes.

While Bennie was considering whether or not to go over to Miss Viola, and while the latter was still beckoning to him, Dan said in a whisper: "He's new round here, ain't he? I ain't seen his kind in the village only once in a great while, an' then they never stayed long enough for me to see 'em more'n once."

"He is little Bennie Moore, and he and his mother are boarding where I board. They came only a few days ago, but Bennie and I are great friends."

Just then Bennie came sauntering along, his hands in his pockets, and a shy expression on his face, for he was in reality a shy little lad, not over-fond of meeting strangers, for all his independent little manners.

Viola drew him beside her. "This is Dan," she said. "Dan Carmen, a little boy who is going to be great friends with me, Bennie, and whom I like very much. Dan, this is Bennie Moore, another little friend of mine, and I'm going to be very proud of you both."

Dan grinned and bobbed his head to Bennie, and Bennie looked sideways at Dan, and didn't grin.

"Why, Bennie," exclaimed Viola, "I was sure you'd like Dan as much as I do, and I hoped Dan would like you too."

Bennie looked embarrassed. "Well, he didn't say 'How do do?' and so I didn't either."

Dan's face brightened. "Oh, I was goin' to say it, but you looked so kind of fine, I was afraid you'd snub a feller that looks like me."

Master Bennie's shyness vanished (maybe the compliment to his appearance was the cause), and he held out a little hand to Dan.

"If Miss Vi likes you," he said, "I'm going to, too, 'cause she always likes nice people. I'm glad you like my clothes. I s'pose if my mother was your mother, and your mother was my mother, then you'd be Ben, and I'd be Dan, and you'd be wearing nice clothes, and I'd be wearing your kind, you see."

"Bravo, Bennie! you're a philosopher, my little man, as well as a dear boy. Now, you must be kind to Dan, and not let the other boys tease him, and he will be good to you when he has a chance, won't you, Dan?"

"You may jus' guess I will, ma'am," was the emphatic reply.

"Ain't your friends good to you?" asked Bennie, in surprise.

Dan's face darkened. "I ain't got a friend in the world 'cept only mammy, an'—he drew close to Viola's side and laid his hand with an affectionate gesture on her arm—"this dear kind lady who only knew me jus' this mornin'."

Bennie's eyes widened. "Oh, my! what a lonesome boy you must be!"

"Well, sometimes I am, an' sometimes I ain't. I don't like the fellers round here anyway, an' they lie an' cheat an' put all the blame on me, an' I get ticked by whoever ketches me, an' the biggest boy of 'em all, that's Bill, he licks me every time he sees me goin' by. Anyhow, I don't care! I don't lie an' cheat; I'd be ashamed to lie myself out of a scrape, so I would."

Bennie glanced around and saw that Miss Viola was busy gathering daisies at the roadside, so he whispered to Dan:

"Why don't you fight those fellers? I would, only when a big fellow comes at me I get afraid, and run away. But I'm littler 'n you, you know."

"I'm ten," replied Dan. "How old are you?"

"Eight, going on nine," Bennie said, stretching his pretty little figure as high as possible. "After nine I'll be ten, too. Then I'll pay off any boy that tries to—then me, I will."

"Well," said Dan, "I s'pose I can fight. I feel it inside of me often, an' sometimes the fight gets out 'fore I can stop it. But, you see, I hold it in as long as I can, 'cause mammy, she's always a tellin' me it's wrong to fight, an' makes me as bad as the other feller; an' anyway, I always feel better in my heart when I've held the fight back, and the boys have gone, an' I've only got their part to be sorry for, an' not my own, for then mammy'd have to be sorry too, you see."

"You are right, Dan," cried Viola, coming up in time to hear the boy's speech, and winking a tear or two from her eyes as she spoke. "You are right, and you are a dear boy in the bargain. Your mother must be a good woman. Tell her I'm coming to see you, and you and she and I will be good friends, won't you? Good by now. I must really go home, and you must not be hindered any longer."

"Good-by, Dan!" called Bennie, following Miss Viola. "You've got three friends now,—your mother, Miss Vi, and me,—you know."

Dan's heart jumped up into his throat. To think that pretty boy should be his friend! Why, he looked—Bennie did—like pictures of kings' sons he had seen in papers now and then, and such a nice boy, too! Oh, Dan was very happy that morning as he trudged along the road, though he did keep his brown eyes roving here and there lest Bill and his crew should pounce out upon him.

Meanwhile Miss Viola told Bennie all about Dan, and the talk she had

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with him under the trees, and that she was going to keep an eye upon him, and help him in every way she could, because he had an honest, true little heart; and no matter how poor and shabby he was, owing to circumstances he couldn't help, he was worth as much kindness and assistance in his little plans as though he were the richest boy in the village.

Bennie was learning some new lessons of kindness of heart and other truths as he talked with her about Dan, and made up his little mind to stand by Dan Carmen through thick and thin. Later in the day Viola questioned the lady of the house about Dan and his mother, and learned that little was known of them except that they had come to the village the year before, and while Mrs. Carmen took in washing (when she could get it), and did, in fact, all sorts of work for whoever called on her for house cleaning or the like, Dan roved hither and thither in search of odd jobs of any kind, sometimes getting the chance to earn a few pennies, and often getting into some scrape which he had to get out of the best way he could.

That the woman was a good laundress had been proven at times, and that she was fond of her son, and he of her, no one doubted or cared. But whether they were strictly honest or not, people hadn't fairly decided; and because of the Indian blood in the boy, it was frequently considered that he was to blame for sundry annoyances committed in the village, etc.

All of this only made Viola more determined to help Dan, for she felt that she knew more about him, after all, than the people who were at home the year round in the pretty little village. She felt quite convinced that Dan was more sinned against than sinning, and there was a look in his eyes which to her appeared brave, honest, and true, however other people might decide. So, poor little Dan and the poor, hard-working mother were put upon her list of people she cared to like and befriend, and I am sure all my young readers will be glad to know that.

The mother of Master Ben was a little cautious, to be sure, about her son's acquaintance with the "scapagoat" of the village, and was not quite willing to adopt Miss Viola's opinion of Dan.

"You know, Bennie," said she privately to him on the evening of the day when our story begins,— "you know you don't want to be intimate with the boy that is considered an out-cast in the village, do you? And there are so many nice, little good boys who are more of your kind, you see, for you to play with."

Bennie tossed his golden head till his sunny hair flew all over his merry, rosy face.

"O mamma, don't you scare a bit!" he said, consolingly. "I ain't going to associate with a bad boy. Dan isn't the least bit bad, and if Miss Vi likes him, I guess you other ladies needn't fret 'bout him. I like him 'cause he's good in his face, and I don't care 'bout his clothes. I don't want to be a girl-boy, you see, and I shouldn't wonder but I'm getting so lately," a little anxiously, and with a glance in the mirror at his long hair, which, notwithstanding many an earnest request on his part, the fond, proud mamma could not find courage to have shorn from the fine shaped head of her own little boy and only child.

"Won't you cut it off pretty soon, mamma?"

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