

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOU, D. D.

EASTER SUNDAY

OUR OWN RESURRECTION

"Who saith to them: Be not affrighted. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified: He is risen; He is not here." (Mark xvi. 6.)

How consoling must these words sound to the good Christian of today! Christ is risen! The earnest follower of Christ can say with all truth: "So I shall rise again after death will have claimed me." Christ has risen, after having happily consummated the work His Father gave Him to do. He who strives to do as Christ did with regard to his calling in life, will feel certain, as the end of his earthly life approaches, that he too will rise to a place of glory. Our own resurrection to immortality and eternal happiness is figured in the resurrection of Christ.

This truth indeed should console all who are endeavoring earnestly to serve God and to pass their lives in a fruitful and meritorious way. Following death, it is the only future for which we can strive and feel morally certain that some day it will be ours. All other futures in life are uncertain, and foolish is he who lives principally in the hope of some day grasping something that he can foresee, but with no assurance that he will obtain it. To a certain extent, ambition is necessary to all, but it must be temperate and lawful; and if it is spent entirely in striving for a bright but uncertain temporal future, in the end bitter remorse will follow in its wake. Man, however, can be ambitious for heavenly things, and enjoy the certainty that his aspirations will be realized, unless he himself puts obstacles in the way. There is no doubt that a future glorious resurrection will be attained by the followers of Christ who live earnest Christian lives.

The Catholic Church expressly teaches that all men will arise again on the last day, in the very bodies that they had during life. This will be done through the power of God. The exact manner in which it will be effected is not known to us, but we know that God in His wisdom and almighty power has planned a wise way of doing it. It is only necessary for us to know that it will really come about.

In the Sacred Scripture, our Lord Jesus Christ has told us several times of our future resurrection; but long before Him it was believed in by the Jews, and also by other races. Job cried out, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God." This same belief gave courage to the seven Machabean brothers as they faced the terrible torments prepared for them: "Thou indeed," said one of them, dying, "O most wicked man, destroyer of us out of this present life; but the King of the world will raise us up, who die for His laws, in the resurrection of eternal life." Another of them, putting forth his tongue to his tormentors and stretching out his hands, burst forth, with the utmost confidence, in these words: "These I have from heaven, but for the laws of God I now despise them: because I hope to receive them again from Him."

Christ on several occasions expressly taught this most ancient and sacred doctrine of a future resurrection. St. John relates how on one occasion He spoke these words: "The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. And they that have done good things shall come forth to the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." The apostles, and especially St. Paul, taught this same doctrine. In St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, when speaking on this subject, he tells the people that the resurrection of Christ is the foundation for, and the figure of, their future resurrection: "For if the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again." And in his Epistle to the Romans, he says: "He that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies." In writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul again speaks thus of the resurrection: "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible; and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal put on immortality."

In the face of these testimonies, there can remain no doubt in the mind of the Christian regarding a future resurrection—when the very same body he had during life will be reunited to his soul, and go with it to share its rewards or its punishment, according as he has lived during the time allotted to him on earth. It is of the greatest importance to us, therefore, that we fully realize this truth and act according to our belief. How foolishly will we spend our lives, unless we so believe and act. If we wish to rise with Christ, or like Him, we must now prepare ourselves for it. Only a life which profitably has been spent will win for us a glorious resurrection. What comes to us through good fortune or luck, as many say, will not dispose of us for it. Only what we intentionally lay hands to and either successfully accomplish, or else make every

effort to do so, though we fail—not, however, through our own fault—will fit us for our glorification on the last day.

While we congratulate our Divine Master today on His glorious resurrection and rejoice because He has triumphed over death, let us also promise Him that earnestly and unceasingly we will try to pass our lives as He would wish us to pass them; and thus, besides winning for ourselves a right to a share in His kingdom, we also will be glorifying Him and giving a good example to our fellow-men. This particularly will please Christ, for it is not so much the words spoken or the joy felt at His great works that bring joy to His Sacred Heart; but it is the efficacious desire to imitate Him as much as possible in these works, for He intended them all, except such as were essentially divine, as examples for our imitation. How fortunate are we who learn these lessons! No one, however, need despair. It is never too late. If one has been negligent in the past, he has not spoiled the future, if he will immediately summon up courage, repent of the past, and by good works and penance be converted to a new life.

THE RESTORATION OF TRUE PEACE

The words addressed by the venerable Dean of the Sacred College, Cardinal Vannutelli, to the Holy Father just after the impressive ceremony of coronation, and the Holy Father's reply deserve special mention at this time, when the world at large is manifesting sincere goodwill toward the Holy See. Cardinal Vannutelli said, "May it be Heaven's wish that the eleventh Pius, heir to the magnanimity of Pius IX., the wisdom of Leo XIII., the firmness of Pius X., and the charity of Benedict XV., may bring about the restoration of true peace, for which Benedict worked so earnestly and with so great love, and that in such a way Christ may be more and more honored amongst the nations in the person of His Vicar."

The appellatives applied by the venerable Cardinal to the last four Pontiffs tersely sum up the reigns of Pius IX., Leo XIII., Pius X., and Benedict XV., by ascribing the character of their respective rules as magnanimity, wisdom, firmness and charity. In replying Pope Pius XI. said: "O may there be given to me the spirit of that real and great holiness, which flourished with so much magnificence in Ambrose and Charles. And may there be given to me together with the spirit of wisdom which was characteristic of Leo XIII., the spirit of that Christian piety towards God and man which had such great and beneficent splendor in both Piuses. If all this is of the highest value to gain grace with God and man, it is at the same time a most apt means of universal pacification, in which was and remains the greatest merit and the greatest glory of Benedict XV."

Pope Pius XI. has already endeavored himself to the whole world by the abundance of his gifts, and his noble character, so especially adapted for the government of the church and the spreading of the Kingdom of Christ on earth. The Holy Father's motto Raptim Transit is one that admirably fits his career, and is an indication we trust of the rapidity with which the peoples of the world have accepted him as their leader.—The Pilot.

THE SUPREMACY OF THE POPE

The Church did not die with St. Peter. It was destined to continue till the end of time; consequently, whatever official prerogatives were conferred on Peter, were not to cease at his death, but were to be handed down to his successors from generation to generation. The Church is in all ages as much in need of a supreme ruler as it was in the days of the apostles. Nay more; as the Church is now more widely diffused than it was then, and is ruled by frailer men, it is more than ever in need of a central power to preserve its unity of faith and uniformity of discipline.

Whatever privileges, therefore, were conferred on Peter, which may be considered essential to the government of the Church, are inherited by the Bishops of the Apostles; just as the constitutional powers given to George Washington have developed on the incumbent of the presidential chair. Peter, it is true, besides the prerogatives inherited in his office, possessed also the gift of inspiration and the power of working miracles. These two latter gifts are not claimed by the Pope, as they were personal to Peter and by no means essential to the government of the Church. God acts towards His Church as we deal with a tender sapling. When we first plant it, we water it and soften the clay about its roots. But when it takes deep root, we leave it to the care of nature's laws. In like manner, when Christ first planted His Church, He nourished its infancy by miraculous agency; but when it grew to be a tree of fair proportions, He left it to be governed by the general laws of His Providence.

The great evil of our times is the unhappy division existing among the professors of Christianity, and

from thousands of hearts a yearning cry goes forth for unity of faith and union of churches. I tell you that Jesus Christ has pointed out the only means by which this unity can be maintained, viz.: The recognition of Peter and his successors as the head of the Church. Build upon this foundation and you will not erect a tower of Babel, nor build upon sand. If all sects were united with the center of unity, then the scattered hosts of Christianity would form an army which atheism and infidelity could no longer withstand. Let us pray that the day may be hastened when religious dissensions will cease, when all Christians will advance with united front under one common leader to plant the cross in every region and win new kingdoms to Jesus Christ.—Cardinal Gibbons.

A man without religion is like a horse without a bridle.



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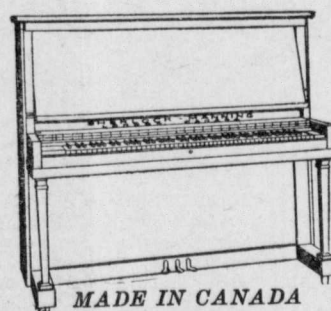
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