

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

By Rev. N. M. REDMOND
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST

WHAT CONSTITUTES TRUE CHARITY

"And the second is like this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matt. xxii, 39.)

It would seem almost lost of time to dwell on the fact, that on the heart of every one of us is inscribed the law: "Do nothing to thy neighbor which thou wouldst be not willing that he should do to thee; but do unto thy neighbor what thou wouldst wish that he would do to thee in similar circumstances." It likewise seems unnecessary to refresh our memory with the recollection, that we are bound by a positive law, as the text betokens, to love our neighbor, or to recall, that the love of God and the love of our neighbor are branches from the same root. Neither can it be said that we are at all strangers to the voice of the Sacred Scriptures telling us that the sign by which we and the world can be sure that we are followers of our blessed Lord, is no other than that designated by Him when He said: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one for another." With all this we are doubtless well acquainted. What, therefore, puzzles us is how to love the safe side in the varied circumstances in which it devolves upon us to practically obey the law. We are aware that circumstances do occur calculated to appeal to the human instincts of any man, to aid his neighbor. It is of interest to know, therefore, what makes the intrinsic difference between the act of the pagan and that of the true Christian. To the befriended the act is the same, but to the befriender it is quite different. The disparity in the motives is the cause of the difference in the acts. The pagan acts from purely natural motives, whilst, as well as his natural sympathies, the Christian has motives for his action which centre in God.

As often then as our motives are Godly, so often are we obeying the law of charity. Hence, the motive for God's sake, must have its seat in our hearts under all the circumstances in which it devolves upon us to aid our neighbor. Without this motive our action is no higher than that of the pagan. The virtue that we are obliged to practice is divine; our motive, therefore, must be nothing different. Thus will we be carried to the most heroic acts of the virtue, conquering all repugnances whatever may be their source. This has been the motive which led the saints in every age, and which has led so many Christian men and women of our age, to works of charity which have attracted the admiration of the world. So, too, will it be as up to the pinnacle where our charity will know no distinction of friend or foe. How Christlike under its divine influence we become! But, alas, how rare is it in this world: "alas, for the rarity of Christian charity!" The world rings with a noisy mockery, which is as far removed from the real virtue as the motives which prompt it are from God. How clearly it shows itself to be a mere mockery in its lack of universality and self-sacrifice. How paganlike; how un-Christian it is, in its distinction between friend and foe! "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; it brands as impossible to obey. Yet thus our teachers, thus our models have borne themselves. David returned good for evil to Saul, who thirsted for his blood; St. Stephen prayed for those who stoned him; St. Paul wished to be anathematized for his persecutors; and our blessed Lord spent thirty and three years on this miserable and ungrateful earth, suffering all manner of insults, prayed for His persecutors, and died for His enemies—all for His enemies. In the hallowed footsteps of these have all those glorious champions followed, that are now in the regions of eternal bliss. In the same hallowed footsteps are those walking, who, purely for God's sake, fill up the days of their lives, according to their circumstances, with works of charity without distinction as to friend or foe. This, too, is the way in which we must go if we aspire to the reward of the charity. Are we in the way—the way of real charity toward friend, foe, and stranger? If so, then we have none but the most favorable opinions of our neighbors and their dispositions and actions. Where undeniable malice does not appear, we put the most favorable construction on our neighbors' actions. We love our neighbors with all the sincerity of Christian affection: With brotherly love, from a sincere heart, love one another earnestly. Our love is no more sentiment, it is real and efficacious, always showing itself in action. It manifests diligence; it uses endeavors to contribute to our neighbors' well-being in soul as well as in body. It is a mistake, entirely too common among people, when they hold that charity imposes no obligation on them to give timely hints and advices to their neighbor, as often as they see him neglect his duty or do positively wrong. Is not the well-being of his soul vastly more important than that of his body? That they are held to give material aid no one will dare deny. God's word is too clear and strong on the matter to admit of any shadow of doubt: "He that hath substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him? Had we no positive testimony from the Holy Scriptures informing us of

our obligation to give spiritual aid, this would suffice. For, how can it be said that the charity of God is in the man who will stand by and see his neighbor perish, when it may be in his power to save him by a seasonable hint, or a timely advice, or instruction? But the word of God, so far from being silent, is most strong in urging us to the fulfillment of our duty in the matter of spiritual aid. From the many texts bearing on the matter, we will conclude with the words: "If anyone of you err from the truth, and one convert him, he must know that he who caused a sinner to be converted from the error of his way shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins."

TEMPERANCE

CONDEMNES "TREATING" SOLDIERS

A British magazine scores as follows the "treating" of soldiers home on sick leave:

"In order that the men might be safeguarded against the false kindness of their friends at home, no gifts of intoxicating drinks are allowed to be forwarded to men serving in the army and navy. But where immeasurable injury has been done, and is still being done, notwithstanding all the restrictions that have been put in force, is through the treating of soldiers by civilians when they are on leave and mixing with their friends and associates out of barracks. Those who live in close proximity to a depot or a camp or frequent any big railway station where troops are constantly coming and going, can not fail to be impressed with the evidences of intoxication manifested by considerable numbers of men in navy and army uniform. The injury that is being done is incalculable. We read quite recently in a leading daily paper about the burial of a soldier. He had been invalided home from the front, where he had made a good stand. He was in the hospital and was progressing favourably. He had been in a terrible condition with bodily wounds and shattered nerves. When convalescent he got a couple of hours leave, and arrived back in the hospital drunk with whisky. Next day, after a terrible night of delirium, he was dead. He had fought the enemy away from the trenches and came home to be killed by the traitor in the midst of us. A considerable proportion of our returned wounded are in such a condition of nerve injury that the use of alcohol means collapse and almost certain death. Why should such a thing be permitted? Ought not these wounded men to be protected and tenderly nursed back again to health, and not left to the ravages of an enemy that is death to them and a curse to the country? "In this connection it is interesting to note that while 85% of the Russian wounded are able after a short time to return to the firing line, the percentage of British capable of again helping in the defense of their country is only 65. If every man possible is needed for carrying this war to victory for us, then here is a tremendously serious consideration. It is beyond dispute that the difference is owing to the fact that the Russian convalescent soldiers are safeguarded by prohibition, while ours are the prey of the open public-house."—Sacred Heart Review.

LONG LIFE OR EARLY DEATH

"The abuse of strong drinks is a most potent and deadly agent of decline of the physical powers."

"Those who indulge in such drinks are specially liable to consumption and inflammatory disorders."

"In abstinence from strong drinks is to be sought the source of muscular vigor and activity."

"Certain insurance tables show that of 61,215 men between the ages of twenty-five and sixty-five, 1,000 died in one year; but in abstainers only 50 died in the same period."

"Alcoholism is a chronic poisoning, resulting from the habitual use of alcohol, which may never go as far as drunkenness."

"It is a mistake to say that those doing hard work require stimulants. Alcohol is in no sense a food, and can not repair tissues."

"In short, alcohol is the most terrible enemy to personal health and family happiness, and to national prosperity."

"Remedy for alcoholism: Total abstinence from all alcohol."

"The teaching of temperance in elementary schools."

"The improvement of the home and its surroundings."

"The provision of plenty of good and properly-cooked food."

"Education of girls and young women in home management."

"Physical training of young men."

The above is the conclusion of the Royal Commission after thoroughly investigating the subject, from the standpoint of physical degeneration. We, too, are concerned with that point of view, but our primary purpose is to check the moral degeneration that is so closely connected with the passion of intemperance.

Console the Heart of our Blessed Saviour, Who suffered such agonies from the thirst as He died on the Cross.—W. J. Lockington, S. J.

Few can utter words of wisdom, but opportunity to speak kinds words is offered to every one; and they are more helpful.

THE OTHER NINE

"Were not ten made clean, and where are the other nine?" Such was the plaintive query of the Saviour after listening to the words of gratitude uttered by a poor leper—one of ten—cleansed of his defilement. Ten had petitioned for the healing virtue which they knew would restore the bloom of health to their putrifying flesh, and ten had been recipients of the bounty for which they prayed. But only one returned to thank the Master for the gift of renewed vigor, only one showed any gratitude for the favor received.

"Where are the other nine?" Not infrequently does "the Giver of every good and perfect gift have success in His ungrateful children who, in the enjoyment of the favors received from His bountiful hand, fail to return thanks for the spiritual or material benefits bestowed on them in response to their petitions. Like "the other nine" they fail to return to give glory to God.

Many people offer up prayers or novenas, or Masses for specified purposes, for blessings and gifts in the order of nature and of grace—to secure employment, to ensure success in business, to children who, in the enjoyment of the favors received from His bountiful hand, fail to return thanks for the spiritual or material benefits bestowed on them in response to their petitions. Like "the other nine" they fail to return to give glory to God. Many people offer up prayers or novenas, or Masses for specified purposes, for blessings and gifts in the order of nature and of grace—to secure employment, to ensure success in business, to children who, in the enjoyment of the favors received from His bountiful hand, fail to return thanks for the spiritual or material benefits bestowed on them in response to their petitions. Like "the other nine" they fail to return to give glory to God. Many people offer up prayers or novenas, or Masses for specified purposes, for blessings and gifts in the order of nature and of grace—to secure employment, to ensure success in business, to children who, in the enjoyment of the favors received from His bountiful hand, fail to return thanks for the spiritual or material benefits bestowed on them in response to their petitions. Like "the other nine" they fail to return to give glory to God.

THE REFORMATION

GIVEN CREDIT FOR THINGS IT ONLY BORROWED

(By Orestes A. Brownson, formerly a Protestant Minister.)

It is plain and evident, that no portion of mankind, though segregated from the direct influence of the Church, can escape the indirect influence of her heavenly guidance to good and her hellish guidance to evil. I do not think that there is in all the world a soul more cordially, tenderly, and—to speak quite openly—more lovingly fond than I am, and I think I even superabundant in love and expressions of love. Is it surprising that his books are cherished, and have power to lure souls from the comfortable ways of ease up the steep path of self-conquest?

Like his patron, the great saint of Assisi, to whom he had intense devotion, he loved all things. Especially did he love all little things. Living though he did surrounded by Alpine grandeur, and familiar as he was with the glories of other lands, it is not of lofty mountains that he often speaks, nor of foaming torrents and yawning precipices, but of things frail and tender, bright or fair: flowers, birds, lambs, smiling meadows, the sweet warmth of summer and winter's fleecy snows. Again and again he appeals to such things, he uses them to illustrate his meaning. All his life he had observed them, and with lover-like ardor he sings their praises: in return, they serve him faithfully. Nature, often betrayed by her friends, degraded by being made an idol, he exalts by using as a stepping-stone to God. As to children, the most blessed of all little things, his love for them was part of a nature which, even in declining years, lost none of its simplicity, none of its trustfulness. 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