

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. P. PEPPE
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST

Jesus answering said: "Where not ten made clean? and where are the nine?" (Luke xvii, 17)

By asking what had become of the nine who did not return to thank Him for curing them, our Lord showed plainly His displeasure at their ingratitude. He has often conferred upon us a spiritual benefit analogous to that which He bestowed upon the ten lepers. At our baptism He cleansed us from the leprosy of sin and although He repeatedly restores to us the grace that we have lost, we do not all return to Him, with real efforts to correct our faults. He seems to say: "I have shown mercy to many, why do they not come back to Me? Why do they not even take one step towards Me by trying to do right?" The only possible answer is that many never deny themselves at all, and especially never practise any inward mortification, without which no one can draw near to Christ.

If we wish to be truly mortified, we must wage war incessantly upon the egoism to which we are so prone, and upon every form of selfishness, for this is one great reason why we fall into sin. Even if a man refrains from obviously sinful wishes and desires, he is still restless and disturbed, inclining now in one direction, now in another, as long as he refers all his aims and objects solely to himself. His nature is so undisciplined that he regards as good only what pleases him. If things occur in accordance with his wishes, he is proud and gives way to exaggerated delight; but if his hopes are frustrated, he gives way to excessive sadness, had temper or even despair. In all these ways does selfishness manifest itself; it often lurks behind specious pretences and alleges motives that seem excellent, but in reality a selfish man aims only at the gratification of his own tastes, whereas a truly pious man aims at peace with God. A selfish man complains of everything, a good man sees God's will everywhere. A selfish man has recourse to all possible means, though they may be sinful, of acquiring what he wants; a good man makes use only of such methods as are pleasing to God. A selfish man is always wondering if he feels happy; a good man inquires first of all what will conduce to God's honor and his neighbor's welfare.

An egoist idolizes self; he considers nothing but his own tastes, which guide him in all his actions and stand between him and God, obscuring all that is higher, preventing him from even desiring heaven and thus causing him to be excluded from it. He who seeks nothing but himself will only find evil on his way through life; and even on his deathbed, when it is too late, he will have only himself, and a knowledge of his own heart. It was in this sense that our Lord said: "He that loveth his life shall lose it" (John xii, 25). A selfish man happy in this world? He may be successful in all his undertakings and perhaps consider himself happy, but no one with higher thoughts and aspirations would agree with him. One who is completely self-centred, and concerned only with earthly pleasures, loses all taste for what is noble and honorable; in course of time he forgets God altogether and cares for men only in so far as he can use them for his own advantage; he may feel comfortable after his own fashion, but he knows nothing at all of the arduous and enthusiasm inspired by religion and virtue, nor of the sweet, consoling intimacy with God, that raises us far above this world with all its petty triviality. He never rejoices at the prosperity of another, nor sympathizes with his neighbor's sorrows. It happens, however, far more frequently, that an egoist suffers misery, even on earth, and has no temporal comfort. He strives to gratify desires, and at the moment when he seems to have succeeded they prove worthless. He feels solitary and forsaken, because he does not cling to God, who alone can never deceive or abandon him; he is embittered against God, himself and the world, and suffers from the deception for which he only is to blame. Many an aching heart is tormented by these results of selfishness, and the egoist resembles a madman, who turns his weapons against himself. How many must acknowledge that they would have occupied a different position and led a different life, if, in their egoistic folly, they had not interfered with the wise designs of God, undermined their own happiness and brought misery upon themselves!

We ought to try with all our might to rid ourselves more and more of all self-seeking; and the way in which this may be accomplished is stated very simply but forcibly by Thomas a Kempis (Book I, ch. 8): "He to whom all things are one, and who refereth all things to one, and seeketh all things in one, may be steadfast in heart and abide in God at peace." This then ought to be our aim—to keep in view the one thing for which we live and move and are, namely, God's holy will. All that we do or avoid, all our joys and sorrows, must harmonize with His will, which we ought to see in all things, so that it becomes the guide of our actions, the reward of our exertions, encouragement to suffer and hope of compensation. In this way we shall always be at peace with God. Conformity with His will is, according to Thomas a Kempis, the weapon with which we can overcome selfishness. He does not mean the sort of resignation which, in a defiant though discouraged

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manner, submit to God's will without operating with it, and let itself be borne along like an empty boat by the waves; nor does he mean that false resignation, which manifests itself only in words, and resents the slightest opposition to one's own will, but he refers to the Christian submission that asks at every step: "What does God wish me to do?" and when His will is known, works zealously and unweariedly in union with it, enduring whatever comes day by day, however painful it may be, with uncomplaining patience. Perhaps the most beautiful petition in the "Our Father" is "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." If we really meant this prayer, we could not fail to improve; but it is not enough to express a desire in words—we must show our good resolution in all our actions and in our whole behavior, and then it will be God's will for us to be happy forever in heaven. Amen.

TEMPERANCE

THE DRINK QUESTION

In just over a hundred pages of distilled wisdom, under the title "The Drink Question," Father Keating, S. J., the able editor of the Month (London), has written an admirable manual, at once informative, illuminating and uplifting, respecting the problem which more perhaps than all others calls for enlightenment, unremitting and enthusiastic Catholic effort. Probably as much as, if not more than any other section of the century in this country and elsewhere Catholics have suffered from the social and personal evils of intemperance, and it is certainly incumbent upon all who desire the well-being of Catholics individually, and the progress of the Church generally, and who are animated by the wish to further the real advancement of humanity, to do whatever may be possible and just to remedy the present wastage of spiritual, material and social possessions caused by over indulgence in alcoholic drinks.

Father Keating's manual, as befits his theme, is remarkably sober, free from over-emphasis and from the slightest tinge of prejudice. In six lucid, well-arranged chapters he discusses the nature of the question, the history of state intervention, the various voluntary efforts made to deal with it, the ethics, the economics and the solution—and few readers except those whose mental view is obscured or distorted by slavery to habit or by prejudice born of financial interest in the sale of intoxicants

could find a sentence in the book calling for dissent. In the first and longest of the chapters, that dealing with "The Nature of the Question," Father Keating has crowded a great deal of valuable matter, and it is pleasant to notice his insistence of the importance of liberty.

As he well says, "Liberty, self-determination, freedom of choice, is a real good, a treasure to be jealously guarded as the highest prerogative of man and necessary for the accomplishment of his end. Unless there is freedom to choose, there is no merit in choosing right; were there no temptations to excess there were little credit in being moderate; if the penalties of wrong-doing were immediate and overwhelming, then virtue would be practically compulsory." Naturally, therefore, the writer's contentions move steadily towards a plea for individual self-control and self-restraint rather than towards absolute prohibition by the state.

He states the question as to alcohol being a food or not very fairly, the statements of the various physicians and bodies of physicians are set down, but the point is made with overwhelming force that alcohol is not a food and that even the moderate use of it under ordinary conditions of health is not advantageous to physical well-being. Hence the existence of the question. For undoubtedly many of the more palpable evils of excessive drinking are diminishing. Social habits are changing slowly, and drunkenness is now very differently regarded than it was in days when it was a gentlemanly thing to drink oneself into physical incapacity. But the nation's "drink bill" still shows increase rather than otherwise, and the fact that the expenditure on alcoholic refreshment (!) would almost pay for the expenditure necessary for army, navy, education, law, police and other national charges is sufficient to answer any critic bold enough to question the need for stupendous reform in the matter. Such reform should spring primarily from personal conviction leading to habits of abstinence and self-control and from an enlightened public opinion leading to due and proper restrictions on the part of the state.

Father Keating recognizes that drink intensifies all the other evils we deplore, but it is not the cause of them all. Sweating, bad housing, insufficient food, imperfect education, excessive facilities for excess, adulterated liquor even—all the dehumanizing elements that disgrace our industrial system enter essentially into the drink question, and the remedies for all, to be effectual, must be sought simultaneously.

The chapter on the Ethics of the Question is absorbingly interesting. The author ranges with ease over the whole subject, from a consideration of Manichean heresies relative to matter, to an exposition of the obligations attaching to the "pledge," and the ethical plea for total abstinence is a little masterpiece of adopt reasoning most lucidly and cogently expressed. A review of the various methods of attempting to solve the question of the drink evil leads the author to the opinion that no solution can be found in mere legislation. Even the "Gothenburg system" has its disadvantages. The Continental cafe system does not lead to less consumption of liquor or less waste of national resources, whilst a great many more people, especially young people and women, would, by the spread of such a system here, be exposed to the danger of acquiring a taste for alcoholic drink. No mere "system" can be successful. As Father Keating says, "Temperance reformers may be cheered by the fact that, owing to legislation, about half of the American people cannot enter a saloon; it is not so cheering to learn that many more than half of them do not enter a church."

"Human nature cannot be reformed by compulsion; there are no more rigid totalitarians than the prisoners in our jails, but they are not reckoned models of virtue. Moral motives alone can effectively remedy such a widespread moral disease natural prudence, personal mere pride even and selfishness, may preserve an individual here and there from sensual excess, but to leave the mass of men a moral appeal is necessary." He believes that "until the habits and prejudices of generations have been altered, until public opinion in this regard has become not merely rational but Christian, the solution of the Drink Question lies in the hands of resolute men and women, inspired by love of God and of their neighbor."—St. Paul Bulletin.

THE PRIESTS OF BELGIUM

Writing to his father in Edinburgh, Private G. MacDougall, a non-Catholic in the Cameron Highlanders, says: "Only those who have been through know how much we owe to the brave Catholic priests of Belgium and France. They are always moving about on their errands of mercy among the wounded, and when you're a piece of an iceberg or something blown in from the South Pole it warms you up only to think of these brave, good men risking their lives by leaving their peaceful retreats to carry comfort to men like myself who are not of their faith. I used to be as hard as anyone at home against the Romans, but after what I have seen out here you can count on me when there's anything to be done in the way of knocking out men who say that the Roman Catholic priests aren't among the finest Christians that God put the breath of life into."—St. Paul Bulletin.

THE CONVENT SCHOOL

A NON-CATHOLIC TELLS WHY HE SENDS HIS DAUGHTERS TO ONE

I am not a Catholic. As far as I know, no one in my family for at least three generations has been a member of the Catholic Church. My father was a Presbyterian elder in the Ohio town where I was born. I myself went for a time to a Presbyterian college. Afterward, at the university where I studied law, I ceased my own church attendance. I took it up again after my marriage, going to the Episcopal church with my wife, who was a graduate of the state university. While we lived in the East we were fairly regular attendants at Sunday services. After we came West we drifted out of the way of going to church. Since my wife's death I have not been inside a church of any kind.

As I am the judge of the United States District Court, and live in a town of less than ten thousand people, my habits are fairly well known to my neighbors. It is because of them, I fancy, that I am so often the recipient of the question, "Why do you send your daughters to a convent school?" And because the reason involves some vitally important phases of American life, I am setting down the evidence that influenced my decision to send my two girls to an educational institution of a religion to which I do not subscribe.

I came from a town that believed ardently in the Public School system of America. I remember that my first orations were for the defense of this system. Afterward, my two years in a sectarian college tempered my belief in Public schools a little. I realized that I received something from my religious instructions that, rebel though I was in most matters of doctrine, impressed me and set me in certain standards that have upheld me through many a moral crisis. My university years seem, from this standpoint of distance, like sliding from the rock of my earlier home and college training. My wife, who had taught in a girls' school in Pennsylvania before our marriage, often made the same remark to me about the relative value of her own university education. In addition to this, she had brought out of the state university a violent prejudice against coeducation. She herself had been an observer rather than a participant in the social life of the university. "The best most girls get out of it is heartache," she would say, "and the worst heartache." Nor did she approve altogether of the girls' school in which she had taught. "There's too much snobbery in them," she declared, "too much materialism, too much emphasis on the purely social. I wonder why we can't establish institutions of the ethical standards of the Catholic convents?"

It was the first time I had ever heard any one suggest that Catholic convents held any standard of education that non-Catholics should emulate. That my wife, who was one of the keenest students I have ever known, should make the remark, impressed me at the time. The memory of it impressed me again when I was struggling to think out the problem of our daughter's education, for my wife's death when Ethel was thirteen, and Abigail eleven, left me helpless to determine the best course for the girls. I had already put Frank, our only son, in the preparatory school of the Presbyterian college in which I had been educated. But I could find no similar school for the girls that satisfied my ideas of moral propriety and educational broadness. True, there were excellent institutions of sectarian bias; but they had, I noted, a narrowing tendency that I have always deprecated. On the other hand, there were educational institutions without any sectarian, in fact, any religious, tendency. But my years on the bench have convinced me of the need of definite religious training.

With the problem left entirely to me I was frankly baffled. It is a strange commentary on American education that the men and women most familiar with various educational systems, public and private, in the country, should be the ones who are hesitant about sending their sons and daughters to the very schools in which they were educated. My wife had consistently opposed coeducation universities and ordinary girls' schools for our daughters. She had, I think, an idea that Ethel and Abigail would eventually go to one of the women's colleges of the East. But in the meantime I had to fill four years for Ethel and six for Abigail.

I consulted my old partner, the Judge, "Send 'em to a Catholic convent," he growled characteristically. "Sisters take care of girls right. That's their business. They're not wasting the money. And 'Glory to God' work is the only kind where the other fellow has a chance to sit in the game." Curiously enough, his words brought back to me my wife's remark about the ethical standards of Catholic convents. I took a mental review of the women in our town whom I knew to be convent graduates, comparing them with women I knew to be the products of other methods of education. With a few exceptions, the balance stood overwhelmingly in favor of the convent-bred women. "I'll send them," I said.

My girls have been for two years in one of the largest Catholic convents in the West. During their first visit home I studied them keenly, looking for evidences of any acquired traits I

might consider undesirable. I did not find them. I had at least expected repression; but I found my girls as heartily wholesome as ever. They are doing well with their work. I know their moral standards are being fused. I know they are safe. And although I am a lonely, middle-aged man in a big house for nine months of the year, I am willing to make the sacrifice in the certainty that I am doing my duty to my daughters in giving them the best kind of an education for their needs. For I have lived long enough to see that the great need of America is men and women of moral strength and high standards; and I can see that these are qualities the convent school is giving to my girls.—Extension Magazine.

IMPROPER DRESS

Among social workers the past few years the question frequently has been raised as to whether improper dress has anything to do with delinquency. Some persons fail to see any logical connection between dress and morals. There is, however, a very close, even if indirect, connection. The matter has been summed up neatly by Mrs. Long, head of the probation division of the Juvenile Court of Chicago.

"Some one has asked," she says, "if the present mode of dress has a bearing on delinquency among girls. I believe it has much to do with it."

"The great trouble of today is that our girls are jumping from the kind; garten out into the world."

"Where is the old fashioned school girl of yesterday, the girl with the long braid and white pinafore, the girl with the old-fashioned mother who considered her little girl a school girl until the time came when she was ready to assume duties and responsibilities in her own home; the mother who selected her daughter's clothing, and who knew just where and with whom she went? I am not advising a return to those old-

fashioned primitive days when our grandmothers sat at the spinning wheel, but I am strongly advising the mothers of to-day to follow the teachings of our grandmothers in protecting the morals of our young girls."

Parental discipline is very much on the wane, as any one familiar with school or college work can easily attest. Many parents have the idea, and act upon it, that the child or youth is fully able to decide between right and wrong; that the youthful mind and moral perspective are sufficiently matured to enable the boy or girl to choose that which is absolutely proper. They fail to realize that on the one hand experience is lacking to these young people, and on the other, budding passions, desires, proclivities, and general inclinations are all based more upon sentiment, egotism, and love of pleasure, than upon sound reason and common sense. It may not be too broad a statement to assert that in the average family of to-day the boys and

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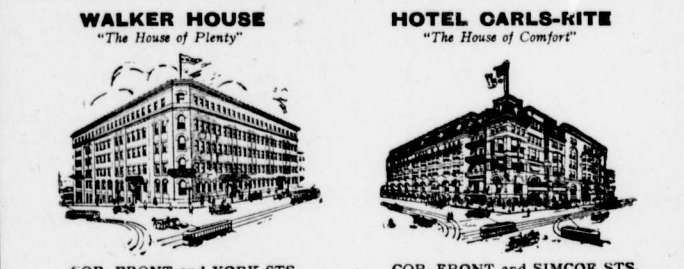
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girls assume practically all responsibility for their actions, without relation to the parental desires or mandates. The result is that later on propriety and convention take the place of moral standard: an action is wrong not in itself, but because it is bad form to be caught at it.—St. Paul Bulletin.

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