

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUT, D. D. TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE FOLD OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD. At that time, to some who trusted themselves as just and despised others, Jesus spoke also this parable: Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. (Luke xviii, 9, 10)

Perhaps in no other place in the Gospels can we get a clearer idea of the Church, in one respect, than expressed in these words of St. Luke. Two men enter the temple—one a Pharisee, a hypocrite known to all the people; the other a publican, a poor man, practically an outcast in the eyes of the world. Our Lord condemned neither of them for entering the temple, but He manifested for us the condition of each one as he passed from the temple. The Pharisee left no better than when he entered; the publican, on the contrary, went out from the temple justified.

The Church of Christ was founded for all men. Christ came on earth for all. He often said that He came for the sinners and not for the just, but this is Biblical language does not mean that He neglects the just. They already know Him, they already are of His fold. He need not seek for them. It is the one outside His fold for whom He is seeking. He is, as He Himself often says, the Good Shepherd; hence, like the real shepherd, while He is solicitous for every member of His flock, it is only for the wandering members that He must go in search and bring back to the fold. Or, if they are wandering wildly through life, since they all belong to Him, He, like the earthly shepherd, will herd them with the already trained members of His flock.

The pasture for this flock in the world is the Church. No one can belong to Christ's fold unless he feed with it in the Church. Now, this pasture is overflowing with an abundance of all that is necessary for the flock that must find its sustenance on it. The Shepherd remains, Christ Himself, though He has His earthly representatives in the Pope, the bishops, and the pastors; the Pope being the head of all, to whom the inferiors must submit and whom they must obey. Hence, all who enter this pasture as members of the flock of Christians will never want and always will be safely guarded, if they possess the right spirit and put forward their honest endeavors toward righteousness. Outside of this pasture, there is no safety.

But, as in all comparisons, identity in every particular is lacking, so in this one—where Christ compares His faithful to the members of the shepherd's flock—there can not exist identity, but somewhat of similarity. The shepherd will not allow the alien to enter his flock; Christ, the Shepherd of souls, permits any to enter His fold, at least in body.

We see this exemplified in the Gospel from which the text is taken. The Pharisee did not belong to the fold of the just; however, he is allowed to enter his pasture, the temple. Neither, perhaps, was the publican fully a member of the true fold when he entered the temple, though he was when he left it, for he went out purified from his sins. Hence we see that, in order fully to be a member of Christ's fold, we must possess the dispositions of soul necessary for union with Him. If these dispositions are not present within us, we can not count ourselves worthy members of His flock, no matter how much we frequent the church.

How regrettable is the fact that today there are so many bearing the seal of Christ, but who are alien to His flock! Some are like the Pharisee, some become like the heathen; others are apostates. There is not a congregation in which all of these are not to be found. We do not speak of those who have never known the pasture of Christ. For them there is an excuse, and, moreover, great hope that perhaps some day many of them, if not all, will be given the opportunity of entering the true fold of Christ.

But why is it that so many who once were members of Christ's flock are now outside of it? There are so many classes of them that we could not enumerate all the different causes; but there is one cause common to all, and that is sin. Sin has driven them down the path of a Judas. Whether they were the remorse of a Judas or not, can not be said. Certain it is, however, that many end like Judas, at least with those terrible words of Christ, "it were better for that man if he had never been born," as true of them as they were of Judas.

One of the common causes of loss of faith, or abandonment of Christ's fold, is too free intercourse with infidels and freethinkers, with persons prejudiced against Catholicity, with those ignorant of the Church's real teaching; books may be ascribed as another cause. The reading of books placed on the index of the Church will bring no good to the Christians; rather, it will do him immeasurable harm. Another of the greatest and most common causes of defection from the true faith, or of a pharisaical rejection of it, is mixed marriages. It is true that promises are required of the non-Catholic party; but in the majority of cases, what importance is placed on these promises by him who does not believe in the

Church, and who very often denies her right of existence? Some are inclined to think it more wise to break these promises than to keep them. Must we not admit that they are made many times, especially in this country, simply to win the Catholic in marriage?

It is well for all, even the frequent church-goers, to ask themselves individually: In what condition do I enter the church? The very fact that I enter it does not prove my righteousness. Do I not enter sometimes as the Pharisee? Or, if I enter in the state of the publican, do I have his dispositions? Am I wandering away from the pasture of the flock of Christ? I may feed on its nourishing food and drink of its refreshing waters, but am I living on them? The Pharisee entered the glorious temple, but all its glory only condemned him.

How wise of Christ—and how kind—to found a Church in which the heart of its members really are known only to Him! And how wise of Him to give us the parable of today's Gospel! He came for sinners. Why reject them from the Church? There only can they hear His voice saying, "Come, follow Me." There only are they truly aroused to penance. Where else will sinners find Christ, if not in the Church? After all, we must confess ourselves sinners.

THE COMMUNION OF SOULS

Chesterton, with the rare perspicacity that distinguishes him from most writers and thinkers on present day problems, once made the apt observation that "everything in the Catholic Church which was condemned by the modern world has been re-introduced by the modern world, and always in a lower form. We have an obvious example of this in psycho-analysis, which is a dangerous and degrading imitation of the confessional."

We have another example also in spiritism. Some of the vagaries of this sinister cult are patent corruptions of Catholic doctrines, conceived by the father of lies with the obvious intent to delude minds and ruin souls. For instance, there is that phase of the spiritistic system which relates to the life after death and the intercommunication between the spirits of the departed and their living brethren. One noted dabbler in Spiritism, recently deceased, calls this communication "a communion of souls. Catholic Faith calls the union that exists between the souls of the departed and the faithful on earth, "the communion of saints."

Even the terminology acknowledges the superiority of the Catholic conception over the spiritistic one. For "communion of saints" implies more than a communion of souls, and lifts the thought to heights unconceived by the spiritists. But it is in the working out in practice of the so-called communication, that we see the truth and beauty of the Catholic doctrine and the fraud and ugliness of the spiritistic theory.

Even the most devoted and enthusiastic proponents of spiritism can give us only superficial and absurd explanations of the life after death as envisioned by spiritism. It is at best a mechanical paradise peopled with pets, relieved by fanciful diversions, and at best but a continuation of the amenities and asceticities of moral existence. Messages that purport to come from spirits about the life after death are moreover suspect.

There is no evidence of the proof of the identity of the spirits with the characters they assume. We know that from the beginning the devil has had power to assume a pleasing shape, and we are justified in believing that such spiritistic messages are supposed to come across the void that separates life from death are not the communications of the souls of the departed with their living brethren, but simply the wiles and deceits of the devil and the evil spirits, trying to deceive the unwary and the unthinking. And certainly the whole history of the spiritistic movement and the record of the disasters mental, moral, physical, and spiritual, that have overtaken dabblers in spiritism, proclaim the diabolical origin and pernicious influence of heeding such so-called communications.

On the other hand, how consoling and uplifting is the Catholic doctrine of the Communion of Saints. It tells us how near and dear to us are those who have passed from the Church on earth to the Church Triumphant in Heaven. It shows how through the loving promise of God they are kept to some degree in touch with us who are still on earth helping us in their prayers, with their intercession, and with their invisible but nevertheless indubitable presence above us and beyond us.

Do we wish an example of how this sublime doctrine works out in practice? We have only to recall the wonderful circumstances connected with the recent canonization of the Little Flower. Millions have hung upon the words of promise uttered by this little saint, "I shall spend my Heaven doing good on earth." The shower of roses began as soon as she entered heaven. It has continued ever since.

Many and marvelous have been the triumphs of St. Therese, but one which deserves special consideration today is the triumphant vindication she has given of the truth of the Catholic doctrine of the Communion of Saints. In these days, when without the Church's fold there is a widespread attraction to the delusions of spiritism, that evil revival of pagan necromancy, with its message of unbelief in God leading to ultimate pessimism and despair, it would seem that God's hand is plainly visible here, pointing the way from spiritism with its communion of souls, to the Church with her Communion of Saints. St. Therese is a living proof of the efficacy of faith to unite us in thought, desire and action with the souls of our dear departed, and to teach us all we need to know about the life after death.—The Pilot.

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THE APPEAL OF ROME

By Floyd Keefer formerly Protestant Minister

A recent writer on South America, setting forth what is, on the whole, one of the most temperate Protestant works on that subject we have seen, gives considerable space to analyzing wherein "the appeal of Rome" in those lands consists. That Catholicism does appeal, and that it has much that is appealing, he willingly agrees, though, of course, his main contention is that our Southern neighbors need "Evangelical Christianity," of the type he himself represents. What he claims for his own religion, however, seems hardly to justify its intrusion, yet because he sets forth his arguments calmly and sanely and indulges in little or no "mud-slinging," his statements are deserving of consideration.

The appeal of Rome he groups under seven heads, as follows: "1. The Church makes a strong appeal to the senses. 2. It appeals to pride and social ambition. 3. It appeals to fear. 4. It appeals to those who find the right of private judgment too burdensome. 5. It appeals to the same love of architectural grandeur and ceremonial splendor as the old primitive religions of the continent. 6. It appeals with the appeal to be found in the great body of Christian Truth to which the Church at large clings. And 7. It appeals on the ground of its antiquity and supposed unity."

On his grounds of appeal, the second and third may be dismissed as being in no sense a necessary part of the Catholic religion, but as existing to some extent in the dominant religion of any region. There are places in the United States for example where membership in certain Protestant denominations is almost a "sine qua non" for employment, and certainly it is for social recognition. I have known of persons who, when settling in a new community, made it a practice to discover the most influential denomination from a business and social standpoint and who promptly joined it, regardless of its beliefs or of their previous connections. It was a purely commercial matter with them. That there are communities in South America where a Protestant would be "persona non grata" and that there may be some lukewarm and hypocritical Catholics who may keep up the outward semblance of connection with the Church to further their own ends, I can readily admit, but these are hardly compelling "appeals" to any great number, and so may easily be dismissed.

The first and the fifth—the appeal to the senses, architectural grandeur and ceremonial, even though the author does slyly hint that they are remnants of paganism, are known to every student of mankind to be simply the appeal to the nature of man. Every man demands some outlet to the appeal of sense, witness the "lodges" of our own land. Puritanism's worst indictment is its suppression of this natural and vital innocent desire on the part of man, for where Puritanism has prevailed it has broken out in other and morally harmful forms. The wisdom of the Church in this is indicated, and if "the old primitive religions" found this out too, it is merely an evidence of the fact that God did not leave even the Gentiles without a means of "seeking after Him, if happily they might find Him."

One would suppose that anyone with a conscience would flinch at "right (or at least the exercise) of private judgment too burdensome," for who is there among devout Protestants who has not longed sometimes for counsel or help in his spiritual difficulties, who has not desired a surety from someone who was authorized to say to him, "Thus saith the Lord?" How many have been driven from Protestantism into open despair and infidelity because when they asked bread of their supposed guides they found naught but a stone?

So there are left the last two of his appeals only. The fact that "Rome" has clung tenaciously to "The doctrine of the Trinity; the original sin, of the fatherhood of God, of the atonement through a vicarious sacrifice, of salvation through a Redeemer, of the Holy Spirit and his sanctifying power and holiness, of the forgiveness of sin, of the universal Kingdom of God, of the union of believers in a mystical body, of the holy sacraments, of the resurrection of the body and of the life everlasting," ought to outweigh many shortcomings, if such there be, for where the foundation is so solid even a ruined and tottering edifice can be made safe against the inroads of the infidelity and doubt which have

shaken North American Protestantism to its base in recent years. And since the Church which makes this "appeal" has stood the test of time ("antiquity") and has preserved itself against the assaults of its enemies ("unity"), what more can be asked?

Over and against these things he would urge as reasons why his religionists should occupy the field this list of "Results that may be expected" from their doing so. "1. The building up of an Evangelical conscience. 2. A deeper mutual appreciation between Romanists and 'Evangelicals.' 3. An awakening on the part of the indifferent and hostile. And 5. Increased confidence and support at the home base."

But why is the first a desideratum? Surely it is not needed, and while Protestants are free in most of the South American republics to live and worship as they please, mere pride in "building up" communities of them can hardly justify the expenditure of vast sums of money, for on the Protestant doctrine that "one church is as good as another" there would seem to be no excuse for it. A changed social conscience may be needed and it is coming, but that is simply a matter of world progress, political and economic, rather than religious in its significance. "Evangelical Christianity" is certainly arrogating to itself claims it cannot substantiate when it lays the change in South America regarding the rights of man (and woman) to the impenetration of the masses by the truths of the gospel "as carried on by their forces. Nor is it easy to see how it can be said that they and not the Church of the people have been the ones to arouse "the indifferent and hostile" except to a greater hostility, one fanned by the fires of religious bigotry and so worse than that carried on by the out-and-out enemies of Christianity.

And it is even more difficult to see how a "deeper mutual appreciation" is to be brought about by "that spur of friendly emulation which has been supplied to it (the Catholic Church) by Protestantism in the United States." Thanks, we did not know before to whom we were indebted for the undoubted spiritual advance made by our fellow-Catholics within the past few years! It would be "important, if true!" But his last contention we can readily admit. Any large success of evangelism in South America would bring to those engaged in it "increased confidence and support"; for there are many well-disposed non-Catholics in this country who, seeing the meagre results of these "missions" and having a feeling that the heathen rather than persons who have had Christianity for centuries are the proper objects of mission work, are very half-hearted in their enthusiasm for such things, and seriously question their value. If these "missionaries" can show some real results, it will bring, as our writer frankly admits he wishes, "greater financial support." There you are, it is a matter of dollars and cents. So why contribute to what is only a means for a few self-styled "missionaries" to live in greater ease and luxury?

The "appeal of Rome" is for fair play, and we leave it to fair-minded non-Catholics whether it would be better to help the Church to which all the people, with insignificant exceptions, belong the Church which has for four centuries been making saints and martyrs among them and to carry on its work more efficiently, rather than to hamper her in a task that needs encouragement and assistance rather than opposition and censure.—Catholic Mirror.

KNOW YOUR RELIGION

Practically every Catholic, some time or other, is called upon to answer some query about Catholic customs, history, or even dogmas. And yet, how many of us are unable to answer simple questions concerning our faith?

What a shock it is to the well-meaning inquirer when his Catholic friend is unable to explain the fundamentals of his religion or the attitude of his Church on certain questions of the day.

It is true that every practical Catholic has at some time studied the principles of his religion, and understands a great deal concerning it. But how often do we forget what we once knew so well.

How often, too, do new questions arise, which the Church answers, but of which we are ignorant. Laymen, of course, are not expected to have the knowledge of theology and kindred subjects which a priest has acquired only through long years of study.

(Nevertheless, every practical Catholic ought to be able to defend the Church intelligently, and to give satisfactory answers to simple queries about it.)

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