

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

REV. F. P. HICKEY, O. S. B.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FORGIVE AND BE FORGIVEN

"Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." (Matt. xviii, 26.)

Very evidently, my dear brethren, in this parable, it is God, who is the Master, and we ourselves the servants, who owe Him so much. And payment must be made. No wonder we cry out: "Have patience with me."

We cannot mean this as a complaint, for God has been patient and long-suffering with us, as all our lives testify. No, these words are not a complaint, but a humble prayer that we may have another chance to try and pay. But then we are confronted with the other word: "Pay Thee all!" All? Of ourselves it would be impossible in an eternity to pay God all! For what is there that we do not owe Him? All that we are, all that we have, all that we can do, is from Him. The light of our eyes is from Him; the voice we praise Him with, the hands we lift to Him in prayer, the heart that should love Him—all are God's. Our health, comforts, hopes, happiness—all from God. Our soul—yes, created by Him, redeemed by Him, and many a time raised to life again by God's grace. No wonder the debt we owe God is so overwhelming; for every time that we have grievously sinned, we have handed over the soul that God has given us to the devil, and God had to purchase it, time after time, with His Most Precious Blood. Pay Him all, indeed—all that He has given us, all that He has done for us? How can it be done?

There are two things to be done, and then, please God, the payment will be made. The first we learn from the servant in the Gospel. Not that he did it; no, he did the very opposite, and brought ruin upon himself. He would not forgive his fellow-servant. That was his ruin. His master had forgiven him his heavy debt simply for being asked, but when he learned the treatment that the fellow-servant had received, "his lord called him and said to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgive thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me; shouldst not thou, then, have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee? And his lord being angry delivered him to the torturers." (Matt. xviii, 32-34.)

This is a lesson that we must not shirk. How many a seemingly good person ruins his soul by this want of forgiveness! Who is there that has not someone who provokes him not to forgive? Yet, whatever offence he has given, what is it to the debt—the accumulation of offences—that we owe the Lord? We must forgive, if we expect forgiveness. Nothing else will do. This is the first necessity; we must forgive.

And remember what led up to our Blessed Lord's speaking this parable. It was St. Peter's question: "Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith to him, I say not to thee, till seven times, but to seventy times seven times." (Matt. xviii, 21, 22.) And our Lord proceeded with the parable of the Gospel of the day. This duty, then, is so plain, so necessary, that no one can find the least loophole of evasion or excuse. Forgive, or otherwise God will exact the last farthing from you.

And can it be that people—good people, they think themselves—are so foolish, so full of spite, that they will dare to risk their souls and anger Almighty God, rather than forgive their brother for an unkind word, for ill-natured ridicule, for a slight, for words which blazed out in anger, for spreading a malicious report? It may not be easy, but it has to be done. Pray God to soften your hearts, that you may be able to forgive, as you hope to be forgiven. Do not think that piety, mistaken piety it is, my brethren, will do instead of forgiveness. "If, therefore, thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother." (Matt. v, 23, 24.)

And this leads us, my dear brethren, to the second thing that we must do—to pay God all. First forgive, and then come to the altar. Yes, through God's merciful goodness, there is an offering we can make, day after day, at the altar, that pays God all. God allows us, wishes us, commands us to make that offering to His own Divine Majesty.

That offering is—the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and He offers Himself on the altar, as He did on the cross, to pay God all. What a privilege for us sinners to gather round the altar, and with the riches of our Saviour's merits, pay God all we owe Him. We offer it first to God's honour and glory. We have forgotten it is often degraded if by our own self-seeking; but at the Blessed Mass we make amends—all honour and glory be to the Almighty through Jesus Christ our Lord. And then we offer Him full and worthy thanks for all His mercies and graces to make up for the thoughtlessness and ingratitude of our daily lives. Then we offer the Sacred Victim "for the remission of sins"—our own, those we have caused others to commit, for all poor sinners, and for souls in purgatory. And then, like children round our Father's table, we

ask Him for the daily bread of strength and blessing and virtues that we need.

Can one be kneeling there at the altar who bears enmity to another? Can there be hatred there, and Jesus so near? Forgive, and pray to be forgiven. And thank our heavenly Father that we have the means, and may we use it gratefully—the Holy Mass—by which we pay Him all.

TEMPERANCE

ALCOHOL PREPAREDNESS

"Preparedness impossible without alcohol" is the flaring "ad" going the rounds in the papers. How true this is! Alcohol prepares, as recent statistics show, for the penitentiary, the poorhouse and the insane asylum. It prepares for many a war between countless husbands and wives. It prepares loving hearts for hate, and happy homes for hunger. No war, either for the defence of the country, the home, or the individual, was ever prepared for by the manufacture of drink. It is bullets and not bottles, not beer but brawn and brains, not drink but drill that prepare a nation for the conflict. Less staggering and more kneeling is required to-day.

TOY-MAKERS AND THE CAUSE

The Swiss, who are famous toy-makers, have used their natural cleverness along this line in behalf of the temperance cause. For instance, to show how large a percentage of crime is due to alcohol, a representation of one of the prisons is given with little doll inmates, first the actual number, and then the number which would be left if all the alcohol-inspired criminals were removed. An experiment tried on certain regiments to show whether or not they could march better after taking beer, is represented graphically, so that the answer is plain at a glance. These illustrations of facts favorable to temperance are always certain of interest at exhibitions.

WHISKY IN PATENT MEDICINES

Representative Meeker of Missouri has called the attention of Congress to the fact that there are 746 patent medicines listed in the Internal Revenue Bureau as containing alcohol. Many of these preparations contain from 16 to 50% of alcohol. There are 14 which contain from 50 to 91% of alcohol. One Jamaica ginger, made in Pennsylvania, contains 93.5%.

"I don't see how any informed man could continue to abolish beers and light wines, and legislate in favor of patent medicines, when one of the latter has 93% alcohol, 20 times as much as beer," said Mr. Meeker.

"One 'Bone Liniment' manufactured in Michigan contains 87% alcohol. On the bottle are instructions as to how much a mother should put into milk for her baby. You will not wonder where alcoholism is coming from in this country!"—Sacred Heart Review.

"JIM WAS DIFFERENT"

Gov. Livingston Beechman, of Rhode Island, said in Providence, apropos of the gigantic strides that the temperance movement is taking: "The whole country now seems to look at excess as the young wife did."

"Jim, dear," said a young wife, "I do wish you'd stop drinking. Every time you go to one of those banquets of yours you get up the next morning pale and silent, you eat nothing, you just gulp down ten or fifteen glasses of water. Do stop drinking, won't you? I know it can't be good for you, dear."

"All great men have been drinking men," said Jim. "Look at Poe, at Charles Lamb, look at Burns, look at—"

"Well, Jim," said the young wife, "you just swear off till you become a great man, too, and I'll be satisfied."

—Washington Star.

THE OLD DOCTOR'S BEADS

Not many years ago, there lived in lower Maryland a physician who had attained a celebrity in his profession that few acquire. So eminent was he that his advice was solicited from all the neighboring counties, and his opinion invariably proved to be correct. The last years of his useful life were spent mostly in visits to the poor. At the early age of six he was placed in Georgetown College, where he remained till he graduated. From the graduating class he was chosen to fill the chair of mathematics, made vacant by the death of Professor Watson. One of the classmates of our future doctor often asserted, they knew not which to admire the more, the young professor's humility and modesty, or his ability.

But it was not from earthly science only that the doctor derived his wonderful skill and success in the practice of medicine; a fund of piety and a saintly life made him what he was. From the time he learned to lip the beautiful Hail Mary at the knee of his pious mother, he had a profound veneration for the Mother of God, and the Holy Rosary was his favorite devotion from childhood.

A pair of beads had come into his possession through several generations, and had been used by some of his ancestors in the turbulent days of English persecution. Several times did he recite those dear beads, his faithful companion day and night. In the long, fatiguing rides of his country practice, he desired no better company than the Rosary, which in many cases had seemed to

him to possess a miraculous power, especially when he desired to calm the agitation of his dying parents. It has been said by others, that no sooner did the doctor put his beads around the neck of the dying, or in the hand, than the most troubled became tranquil and peaceful. In his immediate neighborhood lived several families very antagonistic to Catholicity; descendants of the bitterest English emigrants, they openly declared their animosity and willing-ness to destroy everything Catholic, and a leading father of a family made it no secret that he law only deferred him from laying violent hands on every "papist" he met. He was, however, fond of the doctor, and would have no other to attend his family. His wife became very ill, and our doctor, on leaving her one morning missed his dear beads; he knew it was useless to return and ask for them; such an object of "superstitious worship," as the family termed such things, must be committed to the flames immediately. The doctor was broken-hearted; he returned home sorrowing, and his eyes were not closed in sleep during the night of that eventful day. He could but pray and weep. He promised Masses and other good works if his beads were recovered; fervently did he beg our Blessed Mother to prevent their desecration, and bring them back to his possession. He determined that his first call the following morning should be to the Protestant patient. He sat some time, and at last ventured to inquire if they had seen anything belonging to him after his departure the previous day. They replied, no; and seeing his anxiety, wished to know what he had lost. But the doctor thought it prudent to keep silent; he knew their sentiments too well.

On leaving the house to enter his carriage, one of the little sons ran after him, calling, "Doctor! doctor!" He turned to answer the child, who, casting a glance towards the house as if afraid of being caught in some disgraceful act, slipped something in the doctor's hand, saying in a whisper, "I saw you drop these in mother's room yesterday, and picked them up before Sister got them; I knew she would throw them in the fire."

The doctor had his dear beads once more, and what joy and gladness filled his heart! To the child he said affectionately: "My dear sonnie, I can never forget you for this act of kindness; you have restored to me what I had almost lost on earth. I will beg our Blessed Mother to make you a Catholic, and one of her devoted children."

After many years had elapsed, the doctor received a letter postmarked Little Rock, Ark. On opening it he saw the signature of the former little Protestant boy, who wrote to tell him he was a Catholic, as also his wife and three little children. "The words you uttered to me, doctor, when I gave you your lost beads so many years ago, have ever been ringing in my ears, and something always urged me to see a priest and enter the Church. I at last followed the inspiration, and thanks to the Blessed Mother, I am one of her children. I say my beads daily, and they are responded to by my little family. I owe the grace to her and to you. Continue to pray for me and mine. Your loving and grateful EDIE D."

A few years later the good old doctor passed away with the same precious relics, the beads and crucifix, so tightly clasped in his hands, that it seemed as if he were unwilling to relinquish them even in death. His last words were, "Jesus and Mary his last act, an effort to raise to his dying lips those precious relics; then with a sweet smile to all around, he breathed his last so calmly that his spirit must have been in possession of the beatific vision before the bystanders knew it had departed.

We can sum up the beautiful, useful and edifying life of the saintly old man by reproducing the eulogium, given after his demise, in the daily papers: "Steadfast in his faith, eminent in his profession, genial in his social relations, he has gone to receive the reward of a long and well-spent life."—The Rosary Magazine.

PEACE MAKERS AND PEACE KEEPERS

The Popes have been all through history, the peace-makers and the peace keepers among nations.

Never was there a time, since the dawn of Christianity, when the need of an impartial judge and arbitrator was so urgent as at present, when the best minds in all civilized nations are clouded by prejudice and by nationalism run riot. The arbiter must be one whose influence is international, whose interests are international, whose appeal is moral, whose recommendations are based on justice; and the world has only one individual who meets these requirements.

There are 63,000,000 Catholics in the countries on the side of the Central Powers, and 1,000,000 in those of the Entente Allies.

It would be well just now, when the position of the Holy Father is so much talked about, for people to read what the Catholic Church holds concerning his claims, particularly with reference to Temporal Power. According to our certain knowledge, men, otherwise well informed, believe that when speaking of the temporal power of the Pope, we mean that he should be according the right to rule over all the world in a temporal way.

On the contrary, the Church

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teaches—that each form of government (with its ruler) is independent, and that it has no temporal superior. Temporal power, as applied to the Pope, means his right to this same kind of independence, lest a hostile government of which he might be a subject, should interfere with his spiritual rule over the Church in all countries. During the entire war the Pope has been the best outside friend of all the belligerents. Through his influence thousands of missing men have been located for wives, mothers, and sweethearts; thousands of soldiers are in their own homes instead of in the enemy's prisons; millions have been led to pray daily that good might come out of the evil of the conflict.—Our Sunday Visitor.

THE ROSARY

Non Catholics do not understand the Rosary. To them it is a mere string of beads employed by Catholics to count prayers; they scent superstition in it; they call it un-Scriptural, for does not the Bible condemn "vain repetitions?"

How deluded they are! They see only the body, and not the soul of the Rosary; they know only of the outward form and not of the heart of the devotion; they perceive only the letter and not the spirit of the most beautiful, the most significant, the most powerful of all prayers.

Un-Scriptural? No form of prayer is more Scriptural. It is constituted of the prayer composed by our Divine Saviour Himself, and of the words which the Almighty Father placed in the angel's mouth when He sent him as a messenger to Mary. These prayers, therefore, are not only taken from the Bible, but come direct from Heaven. Moreover, the Rosary cannot be properly said unless one have a fairly complete comprehension of the whole life of Christ, and of the New Testament teaching.

Our non Catholic friends are unaware of the fact that mental prayer should predominate in saying the Rosary. The mental prayer consists in meditation on the different mysteries of faith, fifteen of which are brought vividly to the suppliant's attention when he says the complete Rosary.

The Bible does not condemn repetition, but "vain" repetitions, and everyone who has devoutly practiced the saying of the Rosary will testify from his own experience that the repetitions are not in vain, but have great value as a purchase price of temporal as well as spiritual favors. Did not our Divine Saviour Himself repeat the same prayer several times on the night of His agony? Did He not require St. Peter to repeat three times his protestation of love? Is not the Heavenly Court represented as praising Almighty God incessantly in the self same words? In many of the Psalms, David repeats the same sentiment in every verse. Repetition stresses emphasis and bespeaks an ardent longing for an answer on the part of the one who prays.

The Rosary as an approved form of prayer, and said in union by hundreds of millions of people must have far greater value than the petition of the individual, just as an official document strengthened by thousands of signatures wields influence far beyond a petition privately drafted and presented by a single individual.—Our Sunday Visitor.

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Holy Scripture gives a beautiful commendation to teachers of religion when it says: "They who instruct many unto justice shall shine as stars for all eternity." They who perform faithfully and conscientiously the office of teaching Catechism to the little ones of the flock of Christ are certainly to be included in the Scriptural category of instructors unto justice. They are working for eternity and whatever sacrifice may be entailed in giving up an hour or two each week to the performance of a duty voluntarily assumed for the sake of the Church and its religion and for the sake of souls must bring the reward of a hundredfold, of which the Saviour spoke. It was the ambition of St. Paul to assist his converts to grow up into the full stature of Christ; the labors of the Sunday School teacher are directed to the same end.

To impart instruction is the primary function of a school. To lift up and develop what is best in children by religious instruction is the function of the Sunday School. It is for enlightenment. "Send forth Thy light and Thy truth" into the hearts of the little one is its prayer. It aims first of all at filling the young minds with the facts and teachings of our holy religion; it gives information as to what Catholics believe and do. Its lessons are the means to an end, to know God, then to love Him. Its exhortations and pious exercises, its prayers and hymns, are all directed to the one great end of eternal life, which is "to know Thee, O God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent."

The parent, pastor, teacher and child, are the four elements which enter into the work, and each one has the power to further or retard the labors of the others. Where there is harmonious and effective co-operation the parent insisting upon home study and regular attendance, the pastor giving his intelligent supervision and exhortations, the teacher faithful to her task and systematic in its performance, then children will generally give satisfaction to all, and in later years will appreciate the self-sacrificing labors of those who taught them prayers and Catechism, faith and its duties.—Providence Visitor.

There is no surer remedy for depending weakness than when we have done our own parts, to commit all cheerfully, for the rest, to the good pleasure of heaven.—R. L'Estrange.



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