

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

By Rev. N. M. REDMOND  
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

TRIALS ARE SENT FOR OUR GREATER GOOD

"Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." (John xvi, 20)

We cannot question that afflictions are advantageous to Christians since our Lord made them the portion of His apostles. What is this matter He deemed expedient for His apostles He has considered no less so for all Christians, as His own divine life and doctrine most clearly show. If there be one thing more than another which His most blessed life and doctrine are calculated to teach us, it is the absolute necessity of disengaging our hearts from the love of the world. But to actually effect this, on account of our slowness in aught spiritual, besides His divine example and doctrine, He finds it necessary to put us through a course of discipline. Hence the words of the sacred writ: "As silver is tried by fire, and gold in the furnace, so God tries the hearts of men." What the fire and the furnace are to these precious metals, adversity is to Christians hearts. By it the degree and quality of their virtue are tested, and virtue itself is purified from the dross of earthly affections. The soul descends, and degrades herself, when she centres her affections on less than God, and the common effect of adversity on the soul of the Christian is to raise her affections to where they belong.

It is the fashion of our nature to incline to whatever is congenial, and to shrink from the contrary. So long, therefore, as prosperity marks our course in the world, it is with difficulty that we can keep the affections of our hearts from centering on the world and its goods. But when adversity crosses our path, sober thoughts have place in our souls which enable them to realize the instability of what they before seemed inclined to cherish. "The rod and reproof give wisdom," say the Scriptures; that is, the wisdom which it behoves every Christian to have. Prosperity, like wine intoxicates, and the best and most sobering remedy for this spiritual drunkenness, experience teaches, is adversity. It is bitter, but health-giving medicine. A most remarkable figure of this truth is the prodigal of the Scriptures. So long as he had wherewith to procure his degrading pleasures and satisfy his animal tastes, he was pleased with himself and with the world; but when it became his lot to seek the swine husks, it dawned on him what a mistake he had made in leaving his father's house. It was under the pressure of this bitter though health-giving change of lot, that he resolved to return to his father, cast himself at his feet, and sue for a reconciliation.

Has not prosperity in every age cursed the earth with prodigals, who, in their iniquity, have despised the Heavenly Father? Where is faith the weakest, and sin the rankest? Surely not among the tried and the humble. Plentiful fortunes are unfortunately, but too often, the companions of expensive vices. So that with the prosperity of individuals, to an alarming extent, vice in individuals seems to grow apace. Since contrary causes must produce contrary effects, what better expedient to prepare them to return to their Father, than that, in one way or another, which brought the prodigal of the Scriptures to his senses? Oh, how many, who have gone astray in the intoxication of prosperity, have been sobered, and have returned to God, their long-deserted Father, when struck with the merciful rod of affliction!

It is true, by far the majority of those who have been tried in adversity have not been prodigals—they have been humble and God-fearing. But the remedy which effects the cure of those who have been diseased, is often made use of as a medium of protection to those who have always been healthy. And since it is more to be appreciated, to be always free from infection, than to stand in need of a cure, the mercy of Him Who protects seems ever greater. This should not be other than a source of solid comfort for all those lot is poverty and toil. Surely, since they value their soul's salvation, as they generally do, if they give the matter but a serious thought, they will be compelled to admit that they have been most mercifully protected by the disposition of God's providence. How un-Christian, then, are the murmurs which sometimes escape their lips. It is, however, consoling to know, that with Christians these generally are but sudden outbursts of complaining nature, which have little if any malice, and are repented of as quickly as committed. But this is only to look at the advantages of adversity from a more or less negative standpoint. Can it not be said without fear of mistake, that adversity is the father and guardian of some most excellent virtues of the Christian soul?

Without humility there can be no true virtue, and no one can reasonably deny the great part which adversity takes in establishing and guarding it in the soul. Difficult, in the extreme, is it to be humble of mind when prosperous and flourishing circumstances concur to give us great ideas of ourselves. This made a great Saint and Doctor of the Church say: "That it is more than ordinary happiness not to be overcome by worldly felicity, and much easier not to sink under adversity than not to be elevated at prosperity." With confidence

once may it be said, that the excellent and most necessary virtue of humility is seldom secure save when under the shelter of adversity. It is a plant that seldom grows and never flourishes in a rich soil; it is a child that thrives best under a strict and severe discipline. The smiles and caresses of prosperity, like the over-indulgence of a fond mother, contribute only to its ruin. How many souls have been ruined, and are now in hell, by the smiles and caresses of prosperity, and how many have been saved and are now in heaven by the rod of adversity!

Common indeed is it for some to imagine themselves virtuous when the test is not in sight. They often, like Peter, strangely fancy that nothing could make them act a coward's part. Like soldiers in a mock battle, after a pious reading or touching sermon, they abound in resolutions, that when the real battle will have place they will act the courageous part. But how often, like Peter, are they made by adversity to experience their own weakness, and to understand the speculative nature of the ideas which in their delusion they entertained.

Whether we will or not, trials will come. Since, therefore, we see that when properly borne they are greatly to our interest, can we have any just reason for refusing Christian submission? No. Let us therefore be patient in all the trials that come to us from God; let us feel pleased that by them God's will and pleasure are accomplished in us; let us, in fine, rejoice with the holy apostles, that God has deemed us worthy to suffer for His sake.

TEMPERANCE

HOW TO CURE THE HABIT OF DRUNKENNESS

1. The first remedy consists in giving up at once the use of all intoxicants whatever. To say and promise that you will no longer drink to excess, but will drink only moderately, is an illusion. It was moderate drinking that gradually plunged you into degrading vice, and what moderate drinking has once accomplished in your regard, it will accomplish again. If you are in earnest, give up immediately all use of intoxicants. If you have not the courage to do so, pray earnestly and sincerely for it to Jesus and Mary until you obtain it, as many others have obtained it before you.

2. In the next place, it is absolutely necessary to quit the occasion of drunkenness, and thus avoid all danger and probability of relapse, for, says the Holy Ghost, "he that loveth danger shall perish therein" (Eccl. 3, 27). You are not sincere or in earnest, if you persist in frequenting the same boon companions, the saloons as before. You must keep away from them altogether.

3. Thirdly, it behooves you to make a good and sincere confession, heartily detesting your sins and firmly resolved to die rather than again be guilty of the same sins, or expose yourself to the proximate danger of relapse. You must make your peace with God, if you wish Him to impart His blessing and constancy to your resolutions.

4. Frequent and fervent prayer is necessary to secure perseverance, for of ourselves we are all weak and helpless, and are unable to accomplish anything without God's help, which He will surely give every day to him who asks it every day in prayer. With God's help and grace we can do all things, however difficult they may be.

5. Perseverance has to be secured by frequent confession and Communion, for these sacraments have been instituted in order to impart to us the strength necessary to overcome our evil habits and inclinations. In the sacrament of penance our soul is washed and purified of its sins in the blood of Jesus, and in the Blessed Eucharist we are fed and strengthened with His body and blood, united intimately with Him and enabled to lead a truly sober and Christian life. Why do so many repentant drunkards relapse again into that degrading habit? Because they do not go often enough to confession and Holy Communion.

6. As a powerful remedy and preventative of the repentant drunkard should join a Catholic (and none other) Temperance Society, such as: The Knights of Father Mathew, The Total Abstinence Society. Some of these Catholic Temperance Societies are also mutually beneficial to the members in case of sickness or death. Many of their members have never tasted intoxicants in all their life, but have joined these Societies partly as a preservation against temptation and danger, and partly for the sake of giving good example and encouragement to their fellow-Catholics.—"Sermon Matter."

LIQUOR AND CIVILIZATION

Man is an animal that subsists by eating, drinking and breathing. No matter of what substance his spirit may be composed, he has food and no qualities of the body. Stop his breath for thirty minutes, his food for a month, or his water supply for two months, and his body dies.

If food and drink exercise such a potential influence over life itself, it is reasonable to assume that the character of particular foods and drinks exercise some influence over the particular characteristics of life.

So true is this that we admit without argument the death dealing qualities of certain drugs. No one would think of taking strychnine or prussic acid.

There are drugs which do not act so quickly, but whose effects, though more gradual, are none the less violent. Such, for instance, is morphine, and such are the intoxicating liquors.

When or where drunkenness originated no one seems to know, but drunkenness has come to be a surprising factor in civilized life.

Much of the immorality, degeneracy and beastliness of modern times is directly traceable to its influence.

Not only does it unbalance the individual, giving him a warped view of his duty, and obligations toward society, but its general effect is to make people careless and improvident, and this effect is sometimes transmitted from father to son without the habit itself.

It is impossible to say just how much of the insanity, criminality and debauchery of today is attributable to the grog shop of yesterday, but probably a great deal, and the worst of it is that this same process is bound to stultify the character and mentality of future generations.—Catholic Temperance Advocate.

CHERISH YOUR MOTHER'S MEMORY

At the time of the Spanish-American War, the following beautiful incident went the rounds of some of our secular dailies, says the Francis Herald.

It was just before the battle of Manila Harbour. The command to clear for action had been given, when one of the cabin boys of the flagship had the misfortune to let his jacket fall overboard. He asked for permission to recover it, but the permission was refused. Watching his chance he went to the other side of the ship, sprang overboard, recovered his coat, and then quickly resumed his post. His action was noticed, however, and he was sentenced to confinement for his disobedience. It was for Admiral Dewey to sign the papers that would deprive the lad of his liberty. The admiral, however, first summoned the boy to learn what had induced him to do such a thing. The boy, somewhat abashed took a photograph from his pocket and handed it to the admiral with the words: "My Mother." The picture was in the jacket when the latter fell overboard, and the boy would not forsake it for anything in the world. Admiral Dewey was so moved by his example of filial piety, that he quashed the sentence, saying: "A son that will risk his life for a picture of his mother, will risk it also for his country, and should not be behind bars of iron."

SOMETHING TO DO

One of the most striking parables in the Gospel relates how certain men stood idly by the vineyard that was waiting for workmen to gather its fruits. When reproved by the Master of the vineyard, they replied that they had not been hired. By their excuse they confessed their unwillingness to volunteer.

There is a big vineyard in the world today—Christ's vineyard, the Church—where workmen of all kinds and classes are sorely needed. There are a thousand tasks awaiting the willing doer. Christ's official laborers, the priests, especially in our own country, have more than they can possibly do themselves. Owing to the conditions of our times and country, much work can be done only by laymen. In many a priest's face the door of opportunity is ruthlessly slammed. If, then, the laity refuse to do Christ's work, it means in countless instances that that work will never be done. And on his death-bed many a layman will be tortured by the thought that he might have helped on the cause of the Master if he had but been willing to sacrifice a portion of his ease, to spend a few dollars, or his superfluous money. And all of us will have plenty of things to reproach ourselves for in that dread hour without cold-bloodedly storing up more.

In a loving service of others true happiness consists. Working for Christ is the widest kind of romance. Serving the interest of the Church is more enthralling than any other occupation you can imagine, for we know all the while that victory sooner or later will be ours; that the slightest effort which we make will be increased by God's grace a hundredfold; that nothing we do will be lost in the great cause, and that even a cup of cold water, given for Christ's sake, will receive a reward exceeding great.

We need no formal invitation to work for Christ and His Church. He invites us all to serve. Since we are one big family, of which Christ is the head, all Catholics should have enough spirit and family pride to promote the reign of Christ in the world at large, in the hearts of their fellows, no less than in the little kingdom of their own individual souls.

What, then, are the ways by which we can serve the Church? Some few simple ways open to all of us are these: Join one or other of your parish societies and try your best to promote its interests; give your hearty support to the parochial schools; try to bring back to the Church some wayward Catholic; neglect no opportunity of performing corporal works of mercy; promote Catholic literature by distributing your used periodicals and papers amongst the poor who cannot sub-

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FATHER AND SON

Among the many movements that have originated in recent years in order to promote the welfare of society may be mentioned that of father and son. The traditional beliefs seem to persist that the moral and social development of the children is almost exclusively subjected to the directing hands of the father. Great men, when in a reminiscent mood, are wont to call the influence which a mother's teaching and example has had upon their early and even their later development. It is usual to hear men say that they owe all their success to the inspiration of the mother. While all this may be and, possibly, is true, there still remains a great deal to be said about the duty of the father with regard to the son.

In most families the relations between father and son are confined to an exchange of remarks or views on general subjects during the evening hours after the father has returned from the occupations of the day. The good or bad that may have distinguished the particular day of the boy's life are made the subject of the interview; the boy is praised or he receives a reprimand. Usually that is the sum total of their relations.

Now it would seem that the father should play a far more important role in the development of his son. As a matter of fact, while the youthful mind is plastic and pliable and easily susceptible to the loving impressions made thereon by the tender solicitude of the mother, the masculine fibre in the boy's nature seems to demand another force that is at the same time directive and corrective. This force should be not so much stern as sympathetic. The future man should be made to see things, to view life, to grasp problems, from a man's standpoint.

The average boy venerates his mother, but he cultivates a kind of hero-worship for the father. To the boy's mind his mother is an angel, but his father, a hero. Just as it behooves the mother to so rear a girl as to gain from her complete and unqualified confidence, so it is the duty of the father so to make himself a part of his boy's life and interests as to win for himself the fullest trust and confidence of his son. Once a boy understands thoroughly that his interests, childish though they seem, are looked upon by the father as being important, from that moment the relations between father and son will be closely cemented.

During his earlier years the boy confides entirely to his mother. But as youth succeeds adolescence new problems and new situations arise in his life which, usually speaking, he is left to wrestle with alone. He considers such things beyond the intelligent understanding of the mother, while at the same time he is often deterred from unfolding them to the sternness of an unsympathetic and unapproprative father. The result is that from about his fourteenth year until the age of maturity the boy is left to founder about in a sea of temptation and uncertainty with no guiding hand to direct him securely to a port of safety. It is chiefly during that period that the influence

of the father, his kindly interest, and his genuine sympathy for the boy and his problems are sorely needed. Many a young man can trace his serious errors and frequently his downfall to the lack of real sympathetic guidance which he expected and deserved but never received from the father. The girl is watched over, counseled and protected for many years, and rightly so; but the boy usually is left to shift for himself and to depend upon the conclusions and decisions derived from his immature and inexperienced judgment.—St. Paul Bulletin.

CARDINAL AMETTE

DISCUSSES DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Cardinal Amette's Lenten pastoral letter to the Catholics of Paris which was read in all the churches was a profound yet simple exposition of the position of Divine Providence as regards the War. He points out that God governs the world in view of the last end, which is His glory, procured by the eternal salvation of souls. Ordinarily God governs the world by leaving the second causes created by Him to act according to their nature, freely, with the liberty with which He has endowed them. In the light of these two providential laws must be regarded the enigmas of the Divine government, principal amongst these being the existence of evil in the world, and the apparently inequitable division of the good and bad of life between the just and sinners.

He goes on to explain the two kinds of evil, moral evil or sin, sensible evil or suffering. Hearts and consciences ask themselves with anxiety at times like these how sin and suffering are possible under the empire of an infinitely just and holy God, and in times like those we live in these questions become agonizing. God is not the author of moral evil, which is the contradiction of His Will. Having made man good, given him a knowledge of the moral law and every facility to comply with it, even to raise himself higher, to give more value to his submission to God left him free in his decisions. At the suggestion of the fallen angel man turned away from good and chose evil. If in order to remain faithful to the plan of His creation, God tolerates moral evil, He draws from it in His wisdom great good for us and for Himself. "Without the hate of persecution the patience of the martyrs would not exist," St. Augustine says. God, then, can tolerate moral evil without prejudice to His sanctity and in the same way He can permit sensible evil without detriment to His goodness. Having regarded the affairs of individuals the Cardinal passes to discuss the affairs of nations in the Providence of God. "Justice elevates the nations and sin makes the peoples unhappy." The logical results of vices and virtues have only to produce their fruits. It is not necessary for God to interfere.—The Monitor.

CATHOLIC POPULATION OF ENGLAND

It would probably not be far wrong were the Catholics of England and Wales estimated at the number of 2,000,000. The official figures for 1917 are 1,894,243. Of these, the great bulk are of Irish race or birth. So true is this that Mr. Belloc spoke of them as an Irish colony.

Certainly, the Catholic Church in that country was built up in the mass from the refugees who crowded to England at the time of the famine which so terribly afflicted poor Ireland. And these people came, in the mass, carrying with them little but their faith and their hope and their infinite capacity for hard work. On their generosity the Church has been built up and furnished. And in the sixty or seventy years since the migration of these devoted Catholics, the Church has had time to provide all her requirements out of the gifts and by the energy of her own children. Schools, institutions, societies of all kinds, have risen by the magic of charity. A glance at the Catholic Directory or the Catholic Social Year Book for 1917 shows

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what zeal and work have done.—The Monitor.

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