

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOU, D. D.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER
EPIPHANY

THE LOVE OF GOD

"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed." (Matt. viii. 8.)

The Gospel of this Sunday, among other things, tells of the entrance of Jesus into Capernaum, and of a centurion coming to Him beseeching Him to cure his servant who was sick of the palsy. Jesus answered his request, saying that He would go to his home and heal the servant, but the centurion was overwhelmed at so extraordinary a favor from Jesus, and in all sincerity said: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed."

Considering the infinite gulf dividing us from God, we all must wonder at the goodness of our Maker. He is infinitely perfect, we lamentably imperfect; yet we can approach Him and be to Him friends. He yearns for our friendship, for He loved us first and He wishes to love us always. With Him there is infinite majesty, yet infinite love, and the latter is what makes Him so approachable to us. True love, love that is pure, considers only the object loved and the reason for its being loved. Pomp, great qualities, extraordinary gifts, do not render a being more worthy of the love of God than do ordinary gifts, unless to the former is attached the quality that makes a creature lovable. To God this quality is innocence and virtue. In the infant it is the former; in the adult it is both, or at least the latter, after innocence, once lost, has been restored as much as possible by penance. God loves us also as the work of His hands; this love He always has for us, as is natural, for whatever He does or whatever He creates is, from the fact that it proceeds from Him, an object of love to Him.

But this love that God has for us does not necessarily make Him come the distance He does, to show it to us and for us. This is an outcome of His wonderful generosity and goodness. His love, though infinite, is also infinitely perfect; and did His other attributes not come into play, He might expect a worthiness on our part as commensurate as possible with the perfection of His own love. But, fortunately for us, He knows our weakness. He realizes our inefficiencies, and considers the difficult fight we are ever forced to wage against the enemies of our soul. The condescension, so to speak, on His part, is a part of the fruit of His love for us. In His love we cannot, strictly speaking, call Him a God, but a friend. He Himself well expressed it to us, when He said: "I shall not call you servants, but friends."

If people meditated more upon God and His attributes, they would learn more about Him, and necessarily would be prompted to greater love for Him. To know the good is to love. What must be our love for the infinite goodness of God when it is well known! There is this, too, to God's love; while we are endeavoring to know Him and love Him, He is loving us all the while, and we are unconsciously receiving the fruits of this love. It is not so with man. How often we may love people before they even realize that we are pouring out our hearts to them and yearning for them to love us in return! It may be, as it often is, that they love us, but we want an evident sign of it; we want it to become a love of mutual action. When we love God, we need not consider these things, for we can feel sure that our love is reciprocated more than we can know or experience. His ways of showing it to us in this life are not always plain to the human eye, but they are infallible to the rightly directed heart. We all know Christ's consoling words: "If any man love Me, My Father will love him and we will come to him and take up our abode with him." And what does it mean for God to abide with us but that He lavishes His spiritual gifts—the fruits of His love especially—upon us?

The principal way of obtaining God's love is by the path of humility. This means not only that we should recognize our faults, but also that we should realize our littleness in the face of the great God who created us, and that we should be fully conscious of how undeserving we are of further favors from God. We should feel in our hearts that, even when we perform works of merit, it is only through His generosity; without Him, we can do nothing. And even when God manifests favors to us, as He did the centurion, we should clearly protest to Him our unworthiness. Flesh and blood, as we are, of ourselves we are not fit to receive the generous gifts of our Maker. In a moral sense, were it not for Him, considering ourselves bereft of His grace, we should be worse than the beasts. The air that we breathe is necessary for our existence, but we appreciate it but little. When it is in windy motion, we complain; when we imagine that it is laden with disease germs, we are fearful; when it is cold, we lament; when it is hot, we are depressed; but what would we be without it? It is a lifeless thing, yet we, living

beings, can not exist without it. How we must admit our inability to live—even with our wonderful intellects, our strong wills, our remarkable memories, our big hearts—without the air to breathe! Is it humiliating to us to admit this truth? Certainly it is not; it is elevating. What the air, itself from God's hand, is to us in a physical sense, God is to us in every sense. What humility, then, should we feel as we consider what our fate must be without Him! We never would have existed, would not exist today, and would be a nothing tomorrow, were it not for Him. And you, are you not glad that you do exist? Do you not feel more grateful to God for your existence than you can express in words? It ever will remain true that it is better to be than not to be.

We shall be greater if we humbly acknowledge our present unworthiness in the sight of God, our total dependency upon Him, and our inability to do anything without Him. In Him we live, move, and have our being. Fortunate for us that it is so, if we are fully conscious of it and our living accordingly. We are blameworthy, however, if we are living otherwise, and moreover reducing ourselves to a worse state. To grow to something as humans is to realize that we are yet nothing, and must begin to work in an unworthy condition, but with a full realization of the generosity, goodness, and love of God who offers the aid sufficient for us to walk towards perfection. When we say that we merit a reward, it is not so much the reward that we merit; but it is only fitting ourselves for a reward that a kind Father will give us. Lord, we all should say that we are not worthy, but Thou canst make us so, and Thou wilt do so if we but remain Thy humble servants.

MYSTERY OF THE
MASS

The Rev. Dr. William J. Dawson is the distinguished pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Newark, New Jersey. He has written a religious essay for the September number of the Century Magazine in which he champions the cause of mysteries in religion. He claims that religion cannot be reduced to mere logic without destroying the great appeal of God's Holy doctrine. He abhors the present tendency to destroy the mystic side of religious practice and he claims that the modern attempt at rationalism has forced him to retain this view.

He endeavors to prove his point from practical experience and he penned this paragraph to help make his ideas clear:

"In this respect the Roman Catholic Church is perfectly right when it presents to the people the mystery of the Mass, with no attempt whatever to explain it. It says, 'Here is something that lies beyond reason: take it or leave it; accept it as something inexplicable, dimly seen through sacred symbols, but don't ask any logical explanation.' And the power of this appeal is witnessed by the fact that to multitudes of Christians the Mass, which they do not understand or presume to understand, is the living core of their religion. They submit themselves to the charm of mystery, which draws them out of the world of fact into a world of faith. During Advent I often attended Mass at St. Patrick's in New York, and always with a sense of astonishment. Here were hundreds of persons of all ranks of society bowed in impressive silence. There was no music, no exhortation; nothing in fact but a lighted altar at the end of the long nave, before which the celebrating priest bowed, murmuring ancient Latin words, which the distance alone made unintelligible. Yet it was evident that the worshippers were profoundly moved. What moved them? A sense of profound awe in the presence of what to them was a divine mystery."

Dr. Dawson speaks well and his idea is plainly understood even though some objection might be taken to the words he used to express himself. Catholics do explain the Mass, but they do not attempt to dissect the mystery of Transubstantiation. The Mass is the repetition of the great sacrifice of the Cross. One was offered in a bloody manner, the other in an unbloody manner. The Victim is the same and the high Priest is the same. The death of the Saviour is accurately and tragically shown by the separate consecration of the two species and the ultimate destruction is portrayed by Communion.

One of the greatest failings of the human heart is ingratitude. It is an easy thing to forget past favors. None recognized the results of this vice more than the Saviour Himself. He was to shed His last drop of blood upon the Cross for the sins of men, but what was there to prevent mankind from forgetting this sacrifice with the light of avert this disaster. That sacrifice must be perpetuated for all time and continue daily so that men would have the tragedy of Calvary ever before their eyes. That perpetuation is the Sacrifice of the Mass.

Catholics do explain the Mass. They know exactly without any appearance of doubt, when it came into existence and the reason of its repetition. When the Catholic is asked to explain Transubstantiation he replies that it is a mystery

and does not attempt to explain a mystery. He gives thanks that this is so for the things that are thoroughly understood become very commonplace. Doctor Dawson agrees to this truth and hopes that mystery will ever remain in the practice of religion.

It is difficult to understand how ministers of the Gospel stand in their pulpits and preach with much vehemence about certain miracles in Christ's life while they reject other miracles as impossible. Christ's walking upon the waters, the healing of the deaf, the lame and the blind are some of the favorite topics in use. But when the mystery of Transubstantiation is mentioned there is a complete and emphatic denial of this important action of the Saviour's closing days. The Church's triumphs throughout the ages crowd successfully round the tabernacle of the altar and it is there that Catholics look for the continuation of that spiritual power that daily renews the spiritual life of the world.—Catholic Transcript.

GREAT INCREASE IN TEA
CONSUMPTION

The consumption of tea, it is estimated, increased in 1924 thirty-nine million pounds. The price, as a result, may go to \$1.00 per pound, but even then, tea is the cheapest beverage in the world—aside from water.

WHAT THOSE WHO
KNOW SAY

Rev. James Benninger, (Methodist), Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

"We have fumed and fussed and worked ourselves into a frenzy while the Catholic Church, without any effort on her part, has gone on in the even tenor of her way solving the problems to the satisfaction of her hierarchy."

"How does she do it? How does she get men out of bed on Sunday morning at an early hour—men who work late on Saturday night? How does she fill the streets on Sunday morning with worshippers when the Protestant world is fast asleep? I know some of the explanations that are offered, but they do not explain. Many that we have heard and read only seem childish twaddle. One man will tell you that the Catholic Church contains nobody but ignorant people. But is that true to the facts of the case? Do we not know of brilliant lawyers and judges and professors and business men who are devout worshippers at her shrine? But if it were true that she only had ignorant people, would not the criticism pay her a high compliment? For every Protestant clergyman in Christendom knows that the hardest people to get along with, are ignorant people. A church that can gather and hold the ignorant rabble has a vitality very much to be desired. But the criticism is not true."

"Another man will tell you that the Catholic Church scares people into her fold. How often have you heard that? But that explanation is no better than the first. You can readily see how one generation might be frightened into doing something, but who is willing to believe that twenty generations can be worked upon in the same way? The scarecrow method is bound to play out with the growing years. No, such explanations as we usually hear explain nothing. Her secret lies deeper."

"The reason the Catholic Church succeeds, in spite of our misgivings, is because she is true to the central fact of revelation. She makes the death of Jesus the centre of her devotion, and around that point she organizes all her activities. When you see a company of Catholic people Sunday morning on the way to church, you can be assured of this: they are not going for the sake of fine music; they are not going to hear an eloquent dissertation on 'Dr. Jekyll and Hyde.' They are going to that place of worship to hear Mass."

"What is the celebration of the Mass? It is what we call the celebration of the Lord's supper. That fact is kept prominently before the mind of every Catholic. What is the first thing you see as you approach a Catholic Church? A cross. What is the first thing you see as you enter the Church? A cross. What is the first thing you see a Catholic do as he seats himself in that Church? Make the sign of the cross. What is the last thing held before the eyes of a dying Catholic? A cross. He comes into the Church in childhood imbued with the death of Jesus;

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he goes out of this world thinking of the death of Jesus."

There is no life so narrow that it does not hold more than we at first think conceivable. If, instead of looking with covetous eyes upon the superior benefits which others enjoy, we set at work to live our own life in our own way, we shall be

surprised to find that flowers blossom in soil which we thought only productive of weeds. The great secret is to force ourselves into harmony with our surroundings—it is not always easy to do this—and compel them to yield their best product. This resignation is one of the loftiest of virtues and one of the most heroic.

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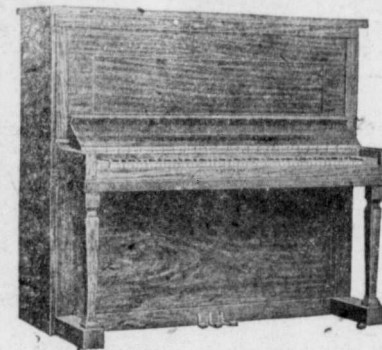
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