

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

By Rev. F. P. Hickey, O. S. B.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

GOD'S CARE FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL SOUL

"There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance." (Luke xv. 7.)

This chapter of St. Luke, my dear brethren, begins, "Now the publican and sinners drew near unto Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." And immediately Jesus took up their word, and showed how God does receive sinners, and how He has a tender care of each individual one, by the parable of the sheep that was lost.

The Gospel leaves no room for doubt on this point, and it is well for us lovingly to realize it. What ruin is brought on those who doubt or disbelieve it! The young and the careless, timid and miserably after their first falls into grievous sin, seeing that nothing has come of it, are tempted to think that God has not the care and the watchfulness over them that they had been taught to believe. At first they affect bravery they do not feel, but by degrees their conscience grows callous, and they say with the fool, "There is no God." The despondent, relapsing sinner and the poor penitent, after years of wandering—are they not tempted to think that God has given them up, has no interest in them, that individually they are lost from before His sight? What a blessing and a help do they lose who doubt or disbelieve that God has a special, loving care for their own individual soul!

Would that each might take this parable of the sheep that was lost and think it out. He spoke who was doing this very thing for each of our erring souls. "What man of you that hath an hundred sheep: and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders, rejoicing; and coming home, call together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost?" Then our Lord speaks straight to the heart of each of us, revealing the parable in its own true light. "I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance." Who can be so blind of heart as not to recognize his own wilful soul in that erring, lost sheep? or ungrateful enough not to acknowledge Who that faithful Shepherd is Who has searched for him in the foul ways of sin, and when He found him, lay him upon His shoulders, no reproaching, chiding, but rejoicing—actually rejoicing—that he was found and could be brought home in safety?

The past tells us how true this is, and has been many and many a time. What has been done in the past, when we knew not and cared not, we may be quite certain will be done for us in the future, if we turn to God, do penance, and strive to keep from sin. Let so many are cowardly as they look forward to the struggle and battle of life. But there is the mistake: we are not all alone and left to our own feeble resources in this striving against evil and temptation. The Shepherd is there, and it is our own wilful disobedience and self-will that leads us astray. If we wander, then we shall be alone, then we are sure to come to grief. Even with the Shepherd near us, oftentimes we shall stumble and fall and be hurt, till we grow weary and disheartened. It seems always going back to confession in shame and confusion, with the same list of mean and petty and selfish offences, even when we have thought that we had tried our best. But, oh! if we have grown despondent and reckless, how much more grievous the falls we have to own to! Then it is that our Lord's most gracious words re-echo in our souls, "There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance." How many, in heaven now, are there from having taken comfort and strength from those blessed words! They have known what it is to lose heart, to think that they are all alone in the struggle, that it is of care to no one what becomes of them; but the figure of the Shepherd has appeared before them in the gloom, they have felt His strong, loving hands lift them and place them on His shoulders and bear them home. May we ever think of Him thus, and remember His consoling words!

God, then, has a loving care of each of us, and wants us to play a manly part ourselves in life. And the great penitent, over whom once the angels had rejoiced, St. Peter himself, in the Epistle, tells us how to do it. We have to quit ourselves like men, but not as if we did it of our own power. No; "Be you humbled," he says, "casting all your solicitude upon Him, for He hath care of you." He tells us of the enemy, not to intimidate, but that we might be alert and "watch, whom resist ye strong in faith." And he would have us know that we have to suffer and so win our way to heaven. "The God of all grace, when you have suffered a little, will Himself perfect, and confirm and establish you." (1 Pet. v. 6, 10.)

The soldier in the battle knows not the plans and stratagems of the

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chief, knows not how the victory is turning, nor how it has been won. He has only to obey, be brave, be patient. So it is with us. God is watching us, and sees the daily conflict between our souls and evil. Let us put all our trust in Him; He will have care of us. St. Bernard says: "The devil suggests evil, we refuse consent; and as often as we resist we overcome the Evil One, rejoice the angels, honour God, Who excites us to fight, helps us to conquer, and strengthens us lest we fall."

THE POPE AND THE WAR

A very violent attack on the Pope and his policy of neutrality during the recent War has recently been published by The Living Church, a Protestant Episcopal journal. Among other things the Papeyists accused of having been an unmitigated despotism whilst it was a ruling power in secular affairs. It is accused of being guilty of "cruelty, corruption, obscurantism and brutality." The seizure of Rome by the Italian army in 1870 is declared to have been heartily welcomed by all the Roman ecclesiastics excepting "a group of sordid ecclesiastics." It is finally alleged that during the War the Pope was guilty of "consistent advocacy of measures in the interests of the Central Powers and of silence in the presence of their colossal crimes."

The decided improvement in the relations between the Vatican and France, an almost equally favorable sentiment between the papacy and the kingdom of Italy, and President Wilson's visit to the Holy Father, show not the faintest reminiscences of any unpleasant feelings due to the Pope's enforced neutrality during the world conflict. There is, in fact, no basis for this malevolent attack on the papacy. Bishop Kelly of Savannah has embodied in a recent pastoral to his diocese a perfect defense of Pope Benedict's attitude during the War. The Bishop takes occasion heartily to praise President Wilson, and he sees in his suggestions to the Peace Council a truly Christian sentiment of justice tempered by mercy and wholly void of the rancor of vengeance.

The Bishop calls attention to the exclusion of the Pope's representative from the Hague convention in 1899, quoting Leo XIII's prophecy of an international catastrophe. "Whatever the future may bring forth, but (the nations of Europe) will find in us, by the grace of God, neither commiseration nor fear."

Leo's successor sacredly kept that pledge. Of all the neutral nations, not one protested the German invasion of Belgium. Benedict XV, alone in the whole neutral world did not connive, and felt no fear, but promptly and vigorously called Germany to account for violating the sanctity of treaties. He furthermore addressed the whole Christian world at the approach of Christmas, 1914, bagging the warring nations to agree to a truce. In the following January he sent another appeal, imploring a brief cessation of hostilities. In February he directed a day of prayer to be observed in all Christendom for the return of peace. The following day he proclaimed three days of fasting and prayer for the same sacred purpose. Soon after by direct interposition with the belligerents the Holy Father obtained from them the exchange of many thousands of permanently injured prisoners of war. He followed this up by securing the internment in Switzerland and Holland of many more thousands of seriously but not permanently disabled prisoners. He made a strenuous attempt to secure the return and parole of prisoners who had families. He instructed all Catholic prelates and priests in the warring nations to pay special attention to all prisoners within their reach, and actively to facilitate their correspondence with their homes and kindred. One result of this was the tracing of one thousand cases of prisoners whose fate was unknown to their wretched families, and whose correspondence with them was thus expedited. "I happen," says the Bishop, "to have been brought into some relation with this papal charity, as a Canadian Orangeman asked me to communicate with the Vatican and get information of his son, who was reported wounded and missing. The Pope found the

boy." Well does Bishop Kelly say that scarcely a month passed but that Pope Benedict did some great and public good thing calculated to mitigate the horrors of the conflict. The question of the justice or injustice of the War was largely upon Belgium's rights to neutrality. Bishop Kelly's summary of the Pope's attitude is so tersely put that we must be loath to quote him: "Why doesn't he protest against the conduct of the Germans in Belgium?" Well, the King and Cabinet of Belgium have publicly thanked the Pope for having so protested. Cardinal Mercier thanked him also for his protest.

In a public address the Pope used these words: "It belongs to the Roman Pontiff, whom God has made Supreme Interpreter and Vicar of the Law, to proclaim before all men that no possible reason can make lawful any violation of justice."

The Belgium Minister thereupon addressed a Note to the Cardinal Secretary of State, asking him if the violation of justice of which the Holy Father had spoken had reference to the German invasion of Belgium. The Cardinal Secretary of State replied, and from his letter I quote the following: "The German Chancellor himself recognized that in the invasion of Belgium was committed a violation of neutrality contrary to international law, justifying it merely on the score of military necessity. It is true that Germany has since published documents by means of which she claims to prove that previous to the War Belgium had failed in the duties of neutrality, which at the time of the invasion no longer existed. Even admitting the German point of view, it must always remain true that on the confession of her own Chancellor, Germany went into Belgium with the consciousness of violating its neutrality, and therefore committed an injustice."

The violation of the neutrality of Belgium, carried out by Germany on the admission of her own Chancellor contrary to international law, was certainly one of those injustices which the Holy Father strongly reprobated. "The Pope sent a strongly worded protest to the Bavarian Government against the deportation of Belgians, and in deference to this protest thirteen thousand Belgians were returned to their homes."

In July, 1915, Pope Benedict XV, said to Mr. Landet: "I strongly condemn the martyrdom of the poor Belgian priests and so many other horrors on which light has been cast." Cardinal Mercier told the Belgians what the Pope had done for them and he added: "If after all this Belgium is not satisfied I am afraid her spiritual piety tempts her to excess of spiritual hunger." He adds that in giving him his photograph the Holy Father wrote on it, "We assure you that we are always with you, and that we share your grief and anguish inasmuch as your Cause is our Cause."

The pastoral of the Bishop of Savannah, in our opinion, deserves a place in the record literature of the War. His Catholic width of vision and poise of judgment are everywhere manifest. Only in the most bigoted Protestant circles do we perceive any flare-back from the general verdict of the world in approval of the Holy Father's neutral policy.—The Missionary.

THE REUNION OF CHRISTENDOM

Several Protestant prelates of the United States have gone on a junket to Europe and the Orient in the general interest of Christian unity and with the particular purpose of inviting delegates to attend a Pan-Christian Conference to consider the possibility of the reunion of Christian churches that have been divided in the course of centuries by schism or heresy from the parent stock. These Christian gentlemen have just visited the centre of Christian unity at Rome, after interviewing leaders of the Greek and Oriental churches and were courteously received by Cardinal Gasparri, Papal Secretary of State, and by Pope Benedict personally who evinced great interest in their mission. His Holiness is reported to have said that such a consummation was rather to be wished for than to be expected until submission is made to the divine authority of the Catholic Church which could not send representatives to the proposed World Congress of non-Catholic Christians. They rather must come first to Rome.

It is to be observed that the Protestant sects in America have become extremely active since the War in movements towards federation of the denominations. As if money could conquer the world to Christ the Methodists are conducting a campaign to raise \$150,000,000 for missionary work, and other sects are dividing the world into zones of influence and mandatories for their respective activities along social and humanitarian lines. It is evident that the Protestant denominations are aware of the scandal caused among the heathens when fifty-seven varieties of them appear in one community, all claiming to be the true Church of Christ. Some denominations such as the Methodists, Baptists and others are split among themselves into various forms of "hard-shell," "dippers," "sprinklers" and so forth. The first step in the process of Christian union is for these dissident bodies to try to get together on some common platform of faith and discipline even remotely resembling the Church founded by Christ.

Modern Protestantism has wandered so far away not only from the Catholic conception of the Church but also from the ideas of the days of its founders such as Luther, Calvin and others, that it can scarcely be called Christianity at all. Wednesday's papers carried a dispatch from London stating that Dr. Newton, pastor of the Temple of London, argued that the church of the future will not be so much a place of worship as a place of companionable gathering. A movement has been started in the British Protestant churches to allow smoking by men and women at the services. We are all aware of the awful stunts pulled off in the non-Catholic churches in California, including jazz music and preachers in shirt sleeves talking politics and everything but religion. Even the soldiers were disgusted with the Y.M.C.A. brand of religion and gave it absent treatment.

The Protestant sects have drifted farther and farther away from the essentials of Christianity since they separated from the body of Christ, and have landed in naturalism and rationalism. The Bible alone as a rule of faith has failed since they denied the divine teaching authority of the Catholic Church. Protestantism and private judgment have given rise to the Christian Science and Spiritualist movements and the religious anarchy of the present day.

The separated brethren have only the vaguest idea of what a church and real unity means. They reject the Catholic doctrine on the constitution of the Church as a perfect society founded by Christ, although the analogy of the unity of nature points to one Christian Church. The ideal of Christ was to have all His followers united in one universal Church where there should be one flock and one shepherd teaching to all nations the things He has commanded. Our Lord instituted a Church for the salvation of men as an object of obedient faith. "Thou art Peter," He said to His first Vicar on earth, "and on this rock I shall build My Church." St. Paul refers to the Church as the body of Christ of which He is the head, having one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Hence St. Cyprian could write in the third century: "God is one, Christ is one, the Church is one." Thus the Divine Founder of the Church prayed, according to His Apostle St. John: "Not only for the unity of faith, but for those who shall believe in it, that all may be one as Thou Father in Me and I in Thee, and that they may be one in Us."

Unity is one of the distinctive marks which make known the true Church established by Christ. The Catholic concept of the Church is that of a society of men united in the profession of the same faith, in the communion of the same sacraments, joined under the rule of legitimate pastors headed by the successors of St. Peter, the Bishop of Rome. Where Peter is, there is the Church, remarked St. Cyprian. Thus the Church has a triple unity by faith, liturgy or cult, especially the Supreme Sacrifice of the Mass, and by government. It was Christ Who so constituted His Church by divine charter that the members are joined in a perfect society having its own end, means, laws and regimen.

Pope Leo XIII, that far-seeing and prudent Pontiff, in his encyclical issued in 1894 on the "Reunion of Christendom" exhorts the separated churches to return to the bosom of the Mother Church from which they have wandered far away like prodigal children. The Holy Father states that some of these sects now urge a union of brotherly love. He answers, How can hearts be united in charity when minds do not agree in faith? How can they be united to Christ the head if they are not members of His body which is the Church? Let us all meet in the unity of faith, His Holiness states, and of the knowledge of the Son of God. The Church as common Mother calls you back to her to worship God together united in perfect charity by profession of one Gospel, one faith and one hope.—The Monitor.

Christ never goes on a vacation. We would it be for us, if forgetting us for His own good pleasure He should abandon us to ourselves, even for a brief space of time.

The Catholic who tries to follow Christ can never go on a vacation as far as the interests of his soul are concerned. He can never, without great spiritual danger, throw down the reins by which he keeps the wild beast within him under control. It is good to give the body a vacation, a change of atmosphere and environment, so as the better to grapple with the problems and difficulties of life. Vacation is a time of re-creation when we build up our strength for the battle of the morrow and prepare ourselves by new sights and experiences to inject fresh zest into our lives.

A CHRISTIAN VACATION

A hard working man needs a change. His nature cries out for it. It is a furlough in the great battle of life. But a true vacation is only a rest for the weary body or the jaded mind. It can never be a success, on a short one from the duties and obligations of our religion. A vacation without religion is a debauch. And this always claims its own bitter wages of remorse, if nothing worse. Therefore, the good Catholic, when away on vacation, will be just as punctilious about his religious duties as he is while at home. Rest cannot

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be had when the mind is worried. And the reproving voice of conscience exerts true rest. Frequently Protestant ministers laud the fidelity of Catholics on vacation to their religious duties. They cannot understand why Catholics at the seashore or summer resort go out of their way to assist at Mass on Sunday and to receive the sacraments. But Catholics know that fidelity in these matters is absolutely necessary if vacation time is to be a true season of peace of mind and body.—Rosary Magazine.

SICK CALL-STIRS LONDON

WHO SUMMONED PRIEST? C. P. A. Service London, England.—A very unusual incident is causing great interest in London circles. One of the Oratorian Fathers was visiting a lady who was sick, and was advised by the physician to leave the administration of the last sacraments to the following morning. He agreed, leaving a message that he should be sent for in case of danger. About 4 a. m., while it was yet dark, a figure which the priest took

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