

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE CONSISTENCY OF FAITH

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism." Eph. iv. 5. The inconsistencies of man can not be numbered. Sometimes we are inclined to that our courage is deplorable, since our inconsistencies are so many. They would be less no doubt, if our courage were always displayed. It is not always a lack of courage that often causes us to be so inconsistent; in many instances it must be attributed to our ignorance. We may not admit that we are ignorant, and usually we are slow to acknowledge our lack of courage; but this does not alter the fact. These two failings are what make us act so often as if we were bereft of reason.

We do not manifest our inconsistencies so openly regarding material things as we do with reference to things spiritual. The very material things before our gaze give us an experimental knowledge that we seldom, if ever, deny. It is not so with regard to spiritual things. These we can not experience; we must believe them on the authority of another. But neither can we, absolutely speaking, experience all material facts. There are thousands of facts that we believe on authority. Who will question the incontestable facts written on the pages of history as having happened hundreds or thousands of years ago? Yet those who believe in the reliability of history never experienced the facts which it records. These things happened year before they were born. It is true that we, perhaps, see similar things happening around us; and by comparison we can judge those mentioned by history to have been possible. However, we do not, as a rule, stop to consider this, but we give our assent readily, almost blindly, to one whom we recognize as an authority.

For the sake of the comparison we wish to make, we intend to speak principally of experimental knowledge. And it is not so much of the knowledge itself that we wish to speak, but of our attitude in the face of it; of the way, in other words, in which we accept it.

We do not like to have violence done to us, as it is contrary to our nature. Now, this repugnance toward violence exists in our senses and in our mind. We naturally recoil at it: our senses resent it almost automatically. In our everyday life we meet with it often. Sometimes it until we experience it. However, this violence is not always the result of intent. What we consider violence is often done to us by irresponsible agents. Who does not know, for instance, of the violence of a stormy sea? Who has not heard of the force of a cloudburst, or of a thunderstorm? Do we not consider the earth violent also, when it trembles and lays cities waste?

The point we wish to clarify is this: We do not consider the sea evil, nor the skies, nor the earth, even though, now and then, they do work havoc amongst us. We would rather that they exist than that they should not. Why? Because the blessings they afford us are practically invaluable to our lives. What would we be without the fruits of the earth, without the canopied sky above us, without the mighty expanses of water between us and other continents? We are willing to suffer their occasional violence in order to enjoy their continual blessings.

Now let us turn to the Almighty: Unfortunately there are many who think that God does them violence—not physical violence, it is true, but intellectual. They say that God wishes to force them to believe truths that they can not understand, and that they can not experience. This they consider violence to their intelligence. Let us ask this class of people: Even if God did demand of you a sacrifice of your intelligence on some occasions, why should you complain? Are you blinded to the vast number of blessings He gives you? Can they, even for a moment, be compared in number with the few so-called acts of intellectual violence He inflicts upon you? Certainly God's favors to man are innumerable, and His blessings of inestimable worth. Man does not even know the number of times God is blessing him. He can not exist without God's help. Man will not regret his material blessings, though the sources of these often inflict violence upon him. Why, then, does he not act consistently, and consider God in this light?

But, as a matter of fact, does God really ask us to do violence to our intelligence in assenting to His truths? He certainly does not. If we think He does, we are culpably ignorant and full of pride. God is infinite in every respect. We are but finite. Can not truths, then, far above our grasp, exist? And can not God ask us, on His authority, to admit them? Nor does He demand of us that we do this without a recompense. That faith we need in admitting them, to which is conjoined good works, will win for us peace in the present world and eternal glory in the next.

How frequently we hear people say that man may believe as he

pleases. If this be so, he can believe only what he experiences, thus limiting his faith to belief in natural facts. Then, too, according to this theory, he need not believe anything that he himself has not really experienced, even though it actually happened. As St. Paul says, we must believe in "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," on our faith. If there is unity in God, unity in faith, and unity in baptism, how can man have multiplicity of belief regarding any or all of them? The truth remains always the truth, no matter what man says or believes. Fire burns. If a man, lunatic or not, denies that it burns, will his assertion deprive the fire of its power to burn? Will the modern or post-Reformation man change the nature of God, or of any of His attributes or commands, because he doesn't believe in them as the Church, commissioned by God, tells all to believe in them?

It may be tolerant to believe as you like and to allow your neighbor the same liberty, but it is a virtue that is not religious. Nay, in one who possesses the true faith, it ceases to be a virtue in any respect. True, man must be tolerant; but with tolerance he must have hope for the conversion of the erring one. Indiscriminate tolerance must not be encouraged in an individual. It must be fought, but with only one weapon—charity. It is a spiritual work of mercy to instruct the ignorant, and today the tolerant are but the ignorant; many, perhaps most of them, inevitably ignorant.

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Sunday, Sept. 4.—St. Rosalia, virgin, was the daughter of a noble family, who, despising the things of this world, sought an abode on Mount Pellegrino, three miles from Palermo and gave herself up to prayer and penance. She died in 1160. The body was translated to Palermo in 1625 and to her patronage the inhabitants ascribe their delivery from a great pestilence.

Monday, Sept. 5.—St. Lawrence Justinian, who was granted a vision of the Eternal Wisdom at the age of nineteen and who held the honors of the world to become a member of the Canons Regular of St. George. He was finally made abbot and became the first patriarch of Venice. He induced many to a holy life and died a happy death in 1485.

Tuesday, Sept. 6.—St. Eleutherius, abbot of St. Mark's, near Spoleto, who was favored with the gift of miracles. On one occasion he raised the dead to life. He died in Rome in 585.

Wednesday, Sept. 7.—St. Cloud, the first and most illustrious saint among the princes of the royal family of the first race of France. He retired from the world and sought a refuge to which he drew other pious souls, who regarded him as a superior. He died in 560.

Thursday, Sept. 8.—The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was brought forth preserved free from the guilt of original sin and pure and beautiful in the sight of God.

Friday, Sept. 9.—St. Peter Claver, a Spanish Jesuit, who consecrated by now to the salvation of the slaves of the West Indies. He fed them, nursed them in loathsome diseases and baptized 40,000 of them before his death in 1654. Though his cloak was the constant covering of the naked and those filled with sores and ulcers, it sent forth a miraculous perfume.

Saturday, Sept. 10.—St. Nicholas of Tolentino, who is said never to have lost his baptismal innocence and whose austerities were conspicuous even among the hermits of St. Augustine, to whom order he belonged. For a long time he took practically no food other than the Blessed Sacrament. He died in 1310.

PRECARIOUS CONDITION OF IRELAND'S SCHOOLS

Dublin, Aug. 10.—"If something is not done immediately to place Irish secondary education in the position of financial equality with that of Great Britain, it is impossible to see how the complete disruption of the system can be avoided."

This extract from the report for 1920 of the Irish Intermediate Board gives an authoritative and accurate glimpse of the precarious financial footing of Catholic intermediate schools in Ireland. The income of the Board is \$425,000 a year, out of which have to be paid expenses of administration, inspection, examination, before a grant can be given to a school or an award to a student. The War increased expenses, and there was a deficit of \$25,000 in December 1919. Towards teachers' salaries grants of \$200,000 and \$250,000 were made. The income made by the British Government in 1918, and never repaid, that Ireland would participate in the increased financial provision for education in Great Britain there would be \$700,000 due and payable to secondary education in Ireland up to the financial end of the year 1920-21. Of that sum only \$250,000 has been paid. The amount due to the end of the financial year 1921-22 would be \$1,150,000, less the two sums of \$250,000 each already paid, leaving \$650,000 due after the

interim grant in the present year has been distributed. This is an illustration of how Ireland is robbed of her just "equivalent" contribution from Imperial funds into which her taxes, in more than "equivalent" proportion, are absorbed against her will.

BLAMES POLITICIANS

FOR MURDER OF PRIEST

(By N. C. W. C. News Service) Birmingham, Ala., Aug. 22.—Formal indictment of the Rev. Edwin R. Stephenson, former Methodist minister who shot and killed the Very Rev. James E. Coyle, pastor of St. Paul's Church here, is expected tomorrow when the Jefferson County jury meets. A warrant charging Stephenson with the murder in the first degree has been sworn out by County Solicitor Joseph R. Tate and it is the opinion of court officials that Stephenson will be arraigned for trial early in October if he is indicted.

There is every probability that Ruth Stephenson Gussmann, daughter of the slayer, will be one of the chief witnesses for the State against her father. It was Miss Stephenson's marriage to Pedro Gussmann, following her conversion to Catholicity last April, that apparently prompted her father to the slaying. Father Coyle performed the marriage ceremony.

SCOUTS SELF-DEFENSE PLEA

"When I heard of the tragedy, I just couldn't believe that such a thing had happened, declared Mrs. Gussmann. 'Poor dear Father Coyle was such a wonderful and noble man.'

"I see my father has entered a claim of self-defense. I don't believe Father Coyle ever struck him. Neither do other Catholics.

"I was baptized in the Catholic faith by Father Kelly at Our Lady of Sorrows on April 10. When I was ready to make my first communion on May 15, my father locked me in a room and mistreated me terribly. I was confined there from Friday until Monday, when I was permitted to leave for work. I never will forget these nights and still have nightmares about the experiences I had. Policemen were guarding all points from which I might make my escape. All to guard one little girl.

"If I had stayed at home they were going to force me to marry another man this fall. This man is a Mason and a divorced man. I could not marry him under the tenets of my religion.

"On the day of my marriage I left the store where I was employed at lunch time in accordance with plans I had made. I thought I would be caught before I met Pedro, for I ran into an uncle as I came out of the store. The police and detective forces were looking for me, I understand. I met Pedro and we went to Bessemer and got the license.

"We hunted for a priest at Bessemer but were unable to find him. We then returned to Birmingham. Father Coyle was the only one who could marry us as no banns had been published.

"He has done a terrible thing, for which there was no excuse."

An eloquent sermon was delivered by the Right Rev. Edward P. Allen, D. D., Bishop of Mobile, on the occasion of the solemn Pontifical Mass of Requiem held in St. Paul's Church.

Bishop Allen told of the friendly relations that had existed between the Catholics and non-Catholics of Birmingham and attributed the change that had been brought about in these relations subsequent to 1915 to self-seeking politicians and secret societies.

Bishop Allen's sermon in part was as follows: "Father Coyle was a zealous and devoted missionary and afterwards a successful professor and rector of McGill Institute, one to whom the students could look up to and whose wise direction they could follow. I felt that he would make a worthy successor of the late Father O'Reilly. In this I have not been disappointed.

"He came here somewhat reluctant to give up the literary work that he was engaged in, but to him the voice of his superior was the voice of God. He came and all can see that his labors have been successful. He labored and preached the word of God in season and out of season, visiting the sick, instructing the little ones of the poor and needy and afflicted.

"He especially labored to bring the people to the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the unbloody sacrifice of Calvary which was offered first by our Divine Lord at the Last Supper. This sacrifice looked forward to the bloody sacrifice of Calvary which was to take place the following day, and every sacrifice of the Mass since then looked back to the bloody sacrifice of Calvary. Through this sacrifice the merits of Christ's passion and death are applied to the souls of men for their sanctification and justification. Hence Father Coyle's anxiety to bring the people to Mass and to induce them to receive in the Mass the Body and Blood of our Divine Lord.

"Hence, when I first visited Birmingham twenty-five years ago, I was pleased beyond measure not only at the cordial greeting extended to me by the members of

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my own flock, who looked upon me as the one sent by the Vicar of Christ to rule, guide and direct them, but I was also gratified beyond measure at the kindly, cordial greeting extended to me by our non-Catholic brethren. Their broad-minded sympathy, their outspoken liberality and cordiality pleased me beyond measure. I found this generous, kindly sympathy in old Birmingham and even under Frank O'Brien when greater Birmingham was coming into being.

"This sentiment continued down until greater Birmingham was accomplished, until, in fact, 1915.

BLAMES THE POLITICIANS

"What has brought the change? Who is responsible for bringing the crowd of mountebanks to misrepresent the doctrines of the Church, to assail her clergy and malign the Sisters of Charity, Sisters of Mercy and the Benedictine Sisters, the noblest women in the land?"

"These disturbers were brought here by politicians and secret societies for their ignoble purposes. These people call themselves true Americans! But they are not American because they are false to American principles of charity and justice and equality. I realize that these sentiments were not endorsed by the great majority of the city of Birmingham, but they allowed this clique to misrepresent and dishonor them.

"Would this unfortunate man who shot Father Coyle, sitting quietly on his porch, have done this if he knew what the Catholic Church preaches, what the priesthood represents? He had a distorted view of the Catholic Church and looked upon it as the enemy of humanity and upon its priests as emissaries of the devil.

"Would he have committed this outrageous act if he had known the Catholic Church as she is and the doctrine she teaches and the pure and self-sacrificing life exacted from the ministers?"

"But the people of Birmingham have permitted themselves to be misrepresented with what result—this tragedy!—the last chapter of which will be enacted today.

ASKS FOR PRAYERS

"To our Catholic people, I remind them of the duty of prayers for the dead pastor. Father Coyle was a noble, self-sacrificing and devoted priest. Still our Almighty God scans the hearts of men and sees blemishes where we see none. Scripture tells us 'Nothing defiled can enter Heaven.' It also tells us that 'It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins.'

"Father Coyle was your devoted friend in life; do not forget him in death."

TO PRAY FOR THOSE WE LOVE

To pray for those on earth I dearly love, O guard and bless our loved ones near and far And lead us onward to our home above, To dwell with Thee, where bright-robed angels are.

Alone with Thee, peace in my rapt soul swelling: In pain and sorrow, Thou my comfort be. Fill all my thoughts, that they may still be dwelling In life, in death, alone with Thee.

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