

## FIVE MINUTE SERMON

## QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

"A blind man sat by the wayside begging." (Luke xlviii, 36)

St. Gregory tells us that we ought to consider our Saviour's miracles, not only so as to acquiesce in the truth of the facts recorded, but also so as to regard them as types of other higher truths.

Thus in to-day's gospel we think with admiration of Our Lord's mercy and power in restoring sight to the blind man, but at the same time we learn to regard the man suffering from physical blindness as a type warning us against spiritual blindness. The gospel teaches us to avoid the latter, since it makes us incapable of seeing what tends to our eternal salvation, blind to the guidance of those deities of helping us, blind to everything that does not flatter our own self will and sensual inclinations, blind to the truth, to duty and to heaven.

"A blind man sat by the wayside begging." All theologians refer these words to the misery of spiritual blindness; especially St. Francis of Sales has chosen these words as representing vividly the intense wretchedness of a spiritually blind soul. A blind man is in a pitiable state; he sees none of the natural objects around him; sky and earth are adorned with all God's wonderful works, but he cannot see them, cannot, like those who have sight, be roused to admiration and delight by the contemplation of their beauty.

When Tobias became blind, he described his sad condition in words that call forth our sympathy, saying: "What manner of joy shall be to me, who sit in darkness and see not the light of heaven?" This literal blindness typifies spiritual blindness and ignorance. The most important truths concerning our salvation are concealed from one who is spiritually blind, and he understands nothing of them. "Blind men of this sort," says an old author, "do not see God above them who will judge them, nor Satan before them, who will drag them down, nor death behind following them, nor hell below awaiting them."

Be grateful for the opportunities given you by God in His goodness, of raising the eye of your mind straight to the light of the true faith, the knowledge of what conduces to your salvation. Pray that God may enlighten your hearts and minds more and more with His light; beg Him never to let your hearts grow blind to faith, hope and charity. The blind will never see Jesus, and it is only by, by no fault of our own, we have passed our lives here in blindness, that we shall nevertheless behold Him in everlasting light.

A blind man sat by the wayside. The fact that he sat indicates the inability of the spiritually blind to do anything meritorious. "What else could he do?" says St. Francis of Sales, "or where should he go? He had no alternative but to sit idle, dirty, despoiled and a burden to himself. In the same way the spiritually blind are devoid of good works and are habitually entangled in sins, laden like prisoners with fetters." The Christian who has faith and spiritual sight, who looks up to Jesus and makes good use of every hour of his life, striving to do every thing for love of God, stamps all his works, even the most trivial, with the mark of merit, but the spiritually blind man wastes his time, doing nothing to secure his salvation, for what he does is done merely from some worldly motive, and not through faith and love of God, and therefore it gives him no claim upon heaven. At the end of his life he might as well have done nothing; he is like the servant who buried his talent in the earth and won no merit, hence, when he died, he appears before his Judge empty-handed.

Let the love of God guide you in all your works, for it is the light without which we can earn no merit for eternity. As St. Paul says in today's epistle: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." (I Cor. xiii, 1).

Nothing is of any good unless we love God. Say often in your hearts: "All for love of Thee, O God!"

The blind man sat by the wayside. Jesus said: "I am the way," but the spiritually blind man is on a different road from that indicated by our Lord, for he is in unbelief or sin, and sits by the way on which the fleeting things of earth appear of the utmost importance. In the Book of Wisdom we have a description of the spiritually blind who lament saying: "We have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known" (v. 6, 7). May you never have cause to utter such a lamentation! Avoid the first step off the path of faith and goodness. The hour when a man in his blindness turns away from Jesus is the saddest in all his life. In vain does he deceive himself, thinking: "I shall soon come back; I am taking only a little step." At the very beginning of the wrong path a sort of glamour lays hold upon us, leading us further and further astray. Our feet are entangled in cunningly laid snares, and it is only when the evil one is practically sure of his prey that the fascination vanishes, and all the attractive things around us

are revealed in their true colors, all the friendly faces appear to be hideous masks, and the garlands adorning the paths of sin prove to be scourges.

The right way is far distant, scarcely visible though bright and clear, and the wanderer thinks it a hopeless undertaking to return to it. Whence shall a soul, weakened by sin, derive courage enough to find it? She has for a long time in her folly rejected the grace of God; will she now have confidence enough to rely upon this grace? Above all things fear the first step on the wrong road.

A blind man sat by the wayside begging.

St. Francis of Sales remarks that blind people are generally so situated that they are poor and forced to ask alms of others. The spiritually blind, however, are weighed down by much more distressing poverty, and we may apply to them what St. John says in the Apocalypse: "Thou sayest, I am rich and made wealthy and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (iii, 17). If you give yourself up to unbelief and sin, you may possess all the riches in the world, and still be poor and unworthy of pity. He alone is rich whose heart is rich; and the man who is spiritually blind is poor; his soul is poor in God's grace; his imagination is poor in thoughts of a glorious future; his memory is poor in the remembrance of good works; his will is poor in good resolutions to do right; and his heart is poor in Divine love and heavenly comfort.

He begs the world for true peace of heart, and the world passes him by, flinging him some paltry alms; worldly pleasures go by, giving him perhaps a fleeting hour of amusement; worldly honors go by, and give him money that satisfies the eye, but not the heart. Now and then the blind man is happy, but, like the little coins flung to a beggar are soon spent, so the trifling joys afforded by earth may for a moment deaden the pain of his heart, but can never give it lasting peace.

Peace will come only when he cries: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me." Therefore, do you also cry earnestly: "Jesus, Son of David, Light of the World, I will be faithful to Thee until death, may I never lose my sight, and never live in such a way as that the sorrowful words: 'A blind man sat by the wayside begging,' may be applicable to me."

## TEMPERANCE

## THE OLD BLACK BOTTLE

Out there at the poorhouse the paupers, in sorrow, are sighing and moaning and waiting the day; no pride in the past, no hope in the morrow, they all are remote from humanity's ties. Yet once they had pride and a wholesome ambition, they looked to the future as bravely as you; what guided their feet to this present condition? Just search for the bottle and you'll have a clue.

The peepers are busy, consistently jailing the homeless and idle, the fools and the knaves; and down in the dungeon the victims are wailing, while over the courthouses our bright banners wave. Oh, why do the jails, in these prosperous regions, forever be filled with this purposeless crew? And why are the criminals counted by legions? Just search for the bottle, and you'll have a clue.

And here are sad women, worn mothers, who've spoken the words, all reluctant, that gained them divorce; the dreams they once dreamed are all shattered and broken, the tale of their loving has finished its course. And once they were brides, and were lovely and blooming, and trusting in men they imagine were true; then why are they plunged in a sorry consuming? Just search for the bottle and you'll have a clue.

The hundreds of children we meet in our walking, deprived of their birthright, the joy of their years; sad children whose faces are seamed by their tears—why, why is their childhood thus robbed of its glory, its beauty and glamour, its rosy hue? The answer alas, is an age-old story; just search for the bottle, and you'll have a clue.

Wherever there's trouble, wherever there's weeping, wherever the vultures of grief are alive, wherever and whenever their night-watch are keeping, and waiting for footsteps that do not arrive; wherever there's squalor, wherever there's famine, if you would discover to what it's all due, it's idle the records to deeply examine—just search for the bottle and you'll have a clue.—Walt Mason, in Collier's Weekly.

## OBSERVING WHERE THE HARM BEGINS

Some one, writing in defense of moderate drinking, says that every one is capable of finding out for himself how much he can drink by observing what amount of alcohol affects him, that is, what amount produces slight signs of intoxication, or a headache the following day.

The objection to this view is that in order to know when the harm really begins, the drinker must be able to sense the subtle changes that precede the recognizable symptoms of alcoholic disease. How can he "observe" the gradual growth of connective tissue in his liver, which leads slowly and without pain to a fatal cirrhosis?

When a drinker begins to be short of breath, can he "observe" the minute deposit of fat in the muscles of his heart by which alcohol is pre-

paring the way for another sudden and unexpected death from "heart failure?"

If the drinker begins to feel twinges that his friends tell him are the signs of rheumatism, will he be likely to attribute them to the alcoholic neuritis which his supposed "moderate" allowance has caused, but has not labeled for his warning?

In short, before the drinker can know whether or not his daily dose of alcohol is harming him, he, a mere man of the working multitude, must have precise knowledge of disease symptoms that often baffles experienced physicians.

The man who boasts of his ability to "carry" large amounts of alcohol without feeling or showing it, has often less reason for self-congratulation than his easily affected neighbor, for, instead of a delicate brain, whose very sensitiveness would warn him against his drink, he has a dull watchman that allows him to injure other organs of his body unwarned of danger.

It is the non-sensitive drinker who may die of alcoholism, though all his life he has avoided intoxication and has acted as a decoy to those of finer nervous sensibilities, who are openly ruined in attempting to follow the example of the "moderate" drinker.—Scientific Temperance Journal.

## ANTI-TREATING PLEDGE

Seamus McManus, in an interview at Olean, N. Y., where he lectured some time ago, said, "drinking in Ireland is rapidly on the decrease since the spread of the temperance anti-treating movement. British statistics show that the Irishman never drank as much as either of his neighbors, the Englishman or the Scotchman. The Irishman may appear to drink more because," says McManus, "when a Scotchman drinks it sinks into his heels and steadies him—when an Englishman takes a drink, it goes to his stomach and he sits down in his parlor, pleased with himself and the world, and dreams of carrying the blessings of civilization, the Bible and the Bottle, to the unfortunate heathen in remote corners of the world. But when an Irishman takes a sip of whiskey, he thinks himself selfish if he doesn't instantly go out and take the street into his confidence."

## OUGHT TO CONVINCE ALL PROTESTANTS

## AN INFLUENTIAL PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL ON "CLIMAX OF THE MENACE'S MEANNESS"

Under the heading "Climax of The Menace's Meanness," The Continent, an influential Presbyterian journal of Chicago, says:

"Whenever The Continent has voiced its unflattering editorial opinion of the Menace—the anti-Roman paper published at Aurora, Missouri—we have discovered that that strange sheet has an amazing assortment of friends. Because we have denounced it for un-Christian hates and reckless untruthfulness we have been accused of being ourselves pro-Papal, though in point of fact The Continent is rather exceptional among church papers for its persistent consideration of the principles of Protestantism is built on. But with a host of people that counts nothing when we protest against fighting Rome with lies and misrepresentation, and refuse to believe that anything and everything becomes beautiful and blessed if only it somehow hurts the Catholics."

At length, however, The Menace has broken out in a new place, which has nothing to do with the Catholics, and of this overweening example of its malignant spirit assailing one of the noblest Protestant laymen we trust that all but the blindest of its partisans will be convinced that the nasty sheet is not worthy of patronage from any person of decency. On the first page of The Menace of October 2 the late Anthony Comstock, then barely laid in his grave, was editorially lauded in an utterance that could scarcely have been conceived above the lowest pits of hell. A man whom thousands of vile libertines and white slavers cursed continually, but who was held in the highest honor as a hero of God by every man intimately acquainted with his spirit and his record, is by The Menace a professed exponent of pure religion, characterized in terms more foul than were used concerning him even by the men whose trade in obscenity he ruined. Is there a Protestant in the United States so mean in spirit that he can fail to repudiate the championship of Protestantism by a publication capable of such a dastardly insult to a great Protestant?

The language The Menace employed no honorable and respectable man would use against the menues of God's creatures. Against the lion-hearted Comstock, with his unsurpassed zeal for purity and his bitter contempt for things low and foul, it is a superlative outrage. It is not possible here to indicate how foul it is. To quote but a fragmentary few of the phrases which the article applies to the dead warrior is to test the limits of propriety's tolerance. "A crawling creature below classification even in the brute creation," "hollowest of hypocrites," "a mind infested with maggots," "his very name a synonym for obscenity," "a professional blackmail," "a degenerate of the most loathsome type," and a few of the insane scurrilities—and not the worst—which The Menace editor exudes. To repeat even so much here is pardonable only for

the sake of exposing to people who do not read The Menace what kind of a cartoon carrier is enjoyed by their neighbors who aid the sheet's circulation.—From Truth.

## WHEN SICKNESS COMES

The thought of death, brought so forcibly before us, brings with equal force the thought of sickness. Well it would be for us, says Father John O'Rourke, in the Messenger of the Sacred Heart, if when sickness enters our homes we could make sure that it would not be unto death, not of course, the death of the body, for sooner or later all must die, but the death of the soul. Sickness in many cases is often, and can always be, an immense grace. How frequently in the souls that for years have been callous to religious influences and dry as summer dust, are there awakened sentiments that have slept for many a day!

Again, sickness is often not unto death, if we would have recourse to God, and avail ourselves of absolution and Extreme Unction. The neglect of these sacraments at such moments may be the death of both body and soul, for the very peace of mind and calmness of spirit which result from these holy means of grace are a great help toward a restoration to health. St. James, too, tells us: Is any one sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man; and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." Yet, how often we find that the priest is the last one called! He reaches the sick bed only to find the patient unconscious or dulled and drugged by narcotics, given often by non-Catholic doctors, who little realize the importance of the sacred duties which the priest performs, and thus at times the salvation of a soul is imperilled or at least the patient is deprived of the merit of acts of faith and resignation which ought to be the companions at the bedside of every soul departing to the presence of God.—Sacred Heart Review.

## WHAT DO OUR PEOPLE READ?

In one of the many books of the "My Impressions of America" type a European who had made a little deeper study than usual of us and our habits and environments wrote to this effect: "Until the people of the United States banish a maliciously lying press they cannot hope to be numbered among the cultured nations of the world."

To-day we laugh when we read of European culture, because we immediately call to mind European battlefields. But this confusion grows immediately out of our very lack of clear reasoning.

I am tempted here to tell of an incident which a noted sociologist who studied abroad for years narrates. I may have referred to it in the past, but I will risk repetition and set it down here. This sociologist was visiting a little hamlet in Germany when he was invited to attend a meeting of a parochial society. To his astonishment the village butcher was the speaker of the evening. And this man whose days were spent behind the block with a cleaver and knife, gave what in America would be accepted as an erudite discussion of the minimum wage question. His knowledge on the subject had been gathered from attendance at various lectures given under the auspices of the parish and supplemented by private reading after his interest on that particular topic had been aroused. Now is this butcher a shining exception. Interest in the more serious concerns of life is deeply rooted in the hearts of the majority of this man's countrymen.

We in America may have some sociologically-inclined butchers and perhaps a few flour besprikled scientists kneading dough in bakeries, but all told they are only some and a few. The average butcher in a lull between cutting pork chops and grinding sausage meat turns to a daily paper or a weekly magazine if he reads at all, while his evenings are spent at the nickel show rather than at a lecture of any kind. Just what the average American reads is an interesting question, for from that we can learn in what channels his mind runs, and a great deal more of generally interesting information concerning him.

This much seems very certain. Today there is not as much reading done by our people as yesterday. The majority of men find every daylight hour pretty well filled with their daily employment. Their personal tastes are satisfied in the few hours of the evening which alone of the twenty-four are really at their disposal. If a man reads at all it is in the lamplight of his home, or he is complete, on Sundays when he is supposed to enjoy luxurious idleness.

Now it is not hard to learn where a goodly portion of our people spend these private or recreation hours. You find every evening in the 5, 10 or 15 cent "shows" in "movie palaces," "Screen maniacs" are being recruited in great numbers every day. From the baby who cannot be left at home alone, whole families forsake the home in the evening and hurry to the picture show around the corner, where the films are changed every day. Of

course it would be foolhardy to assert that all the pictures shown are "bad." But at best they are only the equal of the day's "best sellers." When occasionally Shakespeare is "screened" nothing but the plot is left and really the plot is not Shakespeare.

Now the big numbers who fill the picture-theatres must be subtracted from the ranks of readers. With many the picture show is a substitution for the little reading that was done in past days. Still, there are those who spend their evenings in the old-fashioned way, with a book or paper. And when they do, what is it that they read?

First of all, the daily paper. How well I think this is suited for general perusal I have already stated in the Catholic Press Hour articles. What else besides the daily paper is read? As a rule, one of two things, the weekly or monthly magazine or the closely related dollar-and-a-half copyrighted novel.—Clement Deters in Chicago New World.

## GENEROSITY

Happily a new source of journalistic merriment has recently been found. A man, in one of our smaller American cities, was detained by the police on suspicion of insanity. The reason alleged by the papers was that he had deposited a \$5 bill on the collection plate during church services.

There are, doubtless, instances enough where, judging merely by antecedents, such excess of generosity might well give rise to serious suspicion and rightly cause disquietude within certain circles. On the other hand, the wasteful expenditures incurred by the same individuals in satisfying their costly habits or inordinate passions, and in assuring the attendance of their wives and daughters at questionable plays and amusements would be considered entirely normal.

There are Catholics—present readers always excepted—whose tables are littered with secular literature, but who are too poor to subscribe to Catholic journals or magazines, of which they in particular stand in great need. There are others so burdened with the multitudinous demands of parish interests and Catholic charities, to which they seldom pay any practical attention, that they cannot afford to remember the foreign missions or any other larger needs of the Church. Not a few even are so absorbed in religious services, when of necessity they must attend them, that they become wholly oblivious of the very passing of the collection box in its distracting round before them or else, absent-mindedly, draw a widow's mite from their prosperous purses and generously deposit it with the collection tray for another week.

When such a state of mind has become habitual, it is evident that reasons for serious suspicions would exist, should such people suddenly manifest unexpected symptoms of generosity in matters pertaining to the cause of Christ. However, they can escape the inquisitive scrutiny of an alienist, should nothing worse befall them, by following the admonition of Our Divine Lord: "But when thou dost give alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. That thy alms may be in secret; and thy Father Who seeth in secret will repay thee." This warning in mind, they can safely enter on a new course of munificent generosity in the service of Christ. Retrenching from their former wastefulness in purely secular matters would render such a course easy.—America.

## GOD STILL REIGNS

The pessimistic cry that Christianity has failed in a great crisis and that the war has set the world back some thousands of years is not new. The stupid idea we have encouraged that civilization had reached such a plane that international strife was impossible is responsible for the hysterics of timid souls. Many writers see in the war a permanent departure from all religion and irreparable harm to Christianity.

It is some years ago that Tom Carlyle wrote of England: "We have forgotten God; in the most modern dialect and very truth of the matter, we have taken up the fact of the universe as it is not. We have quietly closed our eyes to the eternal substance of things, and opened them only to the shows and shams of things. There is no longer any God for us. God's laws have become a greatest happiness principle, a parliamentary expediency; the heavens overarch us only as an astronomical time keeper. In our Johnson's dictionary man has lost his soul out of him, and now, after the due period, begins to find the want of it. There is no religion; there is no God; man has lost his soul, and vanity seeks anti-septic salt!"

In spite of the lamentation of the old cynic of Chelsea the world still lives. There are millions of good men and women trying to serve God in holy fear and fervent love. In the designs of God the war may do immense good for humanity. War itself is not the worst thing in the world. Robert Hugh Benson well said: "All the horrors of the war are not so horrible as the sins committed in London in one single day."

The war may be God's appointed way to purge and chasten His people. The nations will come out of it with strengthened faith and a wholesome fear of the Lord.—Intermountain Catholic.



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So I told him I wanted to try the horse for a month. He said "All right, but pay me first, and I'll give you back your money if the horse isn't right."

Well, I didn't like that. I was afraid the horse wasn't "right," but I thought I would wait for a month. I didn't buy the horse, although I wanted it badly. Now this sort of thinking.

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