

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. M. DOBBAERT

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

In today's Gospel our divine Lord shows us what the true spirit of penance is. The proud Pharisee who considered himself to be a model of all virtue, extolled himself even in his prayer, reckoning up his good works and despising other people, whilst the publican approached the house of God with awe and reverence, not venturing to go near the holy place, but standing afar off, overwhelmed by the consciousness of his sins. He did not dare to lift his eyes towards heaven and the God whom he had so often offended, but struck his breast and said with deep contrition: "God be merciful to me a sinner." Our Saviour added by way of comment: "I say to you, this man (i. e., the publican) went down into his house justified rather than the other; because everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

What important lessons are contained in this parable! As long as we think ourselves righteous and flatter ourselves that we do good works and are better than our neighbors, we are devoid of the true spirit of penance, and shall not obtain from God forgiveness of our sins. But as soon as we recognize our sins, and humble ourselves, striking our breasts and saying like the penitent publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner," then we may hope for forgiveness.

1. The first thing essential to true penance is *acknowledgment of guilt*, without which repentance is impossible, and without repentance there can be no forgiveness. How can I be sorry for doing something that I do not regard as wrong? How can I correct what I do not recognize as evil? We cannot attain to a proper knowledge of our sins unless we examine our conscience at least once in each day, remembering the commandments of God and of the Church, and thinking of our duties as human beings, as Christians and as workers in our particular calling. We ought to compare our actions with these commandments and duties, and to do so frequently. If we go to the Sacraments only three or four times in the course of the year, and then merely in a careless, indifferent manner, living otherwise without any serious thought at all, it is scarcely possible in a few minutes to make such a thorough examination of conscience as to be able to say truthfully: "I know myself." No, let us not be deceived; to know oneself is not so easy a matter that it can be accomplished without any exertion, and without keeping a careful watch upon all one's actions. Our perverse self-love makes us blind to our faults, for it represents our sins as too slight to deserve punishment and as quite excusable. Sometimes it even suggests the pitiable pretext that there are many worse than ourselves. This is what the Pharisee meant by saying: "O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men."

2. For our repentance to be genuine, however, it is not enough for us to recognize our sins, but we must also *confess* them. This is why our Saviour instituted the holy Sacrament of Penance, in order that those, who were not ashamed to offend God by sin, might also not be ashamed to confess their sins to the priest acting as God's representative. Hence St. John says: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." It would be the height of folly not to reveal our sins to the priest in the holy tribunal of penance. How can a sick person expect to recover who will not reveal his malady to a physician, ready and able to help him, but insists upon declaring himself to be in good health, whereas he is really ill? Let no miserable human respect keep us away from the Sacrament of Penance. You should fear God, not men; for God is able not only to kill the body, but to cast the soul also into destruction. Never forget that after death and again at the last day we shall have to account, not to men, but to God, the all holy, from Whom nothing is hidden.

Let us therefore lay aside all our pride, and in true humility and confession of heart acknowledge that we are sinners, and confess our sins and shortcomings in the holy tribunal of penance. Like the publican in the gospel, let us strike our breasts saying: "God be merciful to me a sinner." Not unless we have such dispositions shall we obtain forgiveness of our sins, and recover the peace of heart that we have lost; not unless we are truly contrite shall we be justified before Him who has redeemed us, and who is now our Mediator and the refuge of sinners—Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Amen.

THE ONLY RETURN

We ought, wrote St. Paul, to give thanks for all things to God, the Father, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Gratitude is indeed a duty that must be accomplished in order to be just toward God Who has given us all things. But it is only by Jesus Christ, by His Sacrifice of thanksgiving, that we can acquit ourselves fully of this duty. Let us take at this very moment the resolu-

tion of thanking God frequently, and of thanking Him in the manner that He wishes, that is, by His Son offered for this end on our altars.

But that our thanksgiving should be perfect, the union of sentiment with the Divine Sacrifice of thanksgiving, does not suffice. There should be union of acts, union of life. There should be the gift of self united to the gift that Jesus makes of Himself to God on our altars.

Such is the true and perfect thanksgiving of man to God, his great Benefactor. Such is the true and only return worthy of Him. God has given us everything, even Himself. We can do nothing better than return to God all that we are and all that we possess.—Sentinel of Blessed Sacrament.

PROTESTANTISM

THE PARLIAMENTARY ORIGIN

(By "M. C. L.") in Catholic Herald

Ever and anon we meet with the assertion that the Church of England of today is one with the Church of England before the Reformation, and that both are Catholic, not Roman; which sets us wondering why it was necessary in the 16th century to formally separate from Rome, and to set up a local Pope in the person of the reigning sovereign. As a matter of simple fact, the Church in England before the Reformation taught the faith that the Church in France, in Spain, in Ireland, Scotland, etc., taught, the faith that the Apostles and their successors taught, and men looked to the See of Peter for authoritative decisions and spiritual guidance; the Church in those days was as now, not the Church of any one country, nation, or locality, but of all; the Universal Church, in unity with the centre of unity at Rome. It was not until after the breach with that centre that the National faith of England was settled by a majority of votes in Parliament, just as it is at present, and subject to amendment, modification, or alteration by similar expert theologists who settle the duty on tea and the tax on income, etc. It is not true that at the English "Reformation" the Supremacy of the Pope and "Romanism" were rejected on religious or spiritual grounds. The Royal supremacy and a new religion, made in Germany, were forced upon the nation by armed mercenaries, by axe and gibbet, and successive penal laws. To claim the contrary, and that a modern, local sect, whose creed is the result of Parliamentary votes, is the Catholic Church, indicates on the part of the claimants a forgetfulness of the facts that histories have been written and that the majority of men can read. "It was tyranny that cut off England from Rome," the non-Catholic historian Gardiner writes. ("English Church from Henry VIII.") In 1548, to supersede the Catholic Liturgy of England—the ancient and venerable liturgy of Rome—the Book of Common Prayer was drawn up, and, as Father Bilsborrow writes, Cranmer and his reforming allies by addition and correction tried to introduce their creed, and to satisfy the men of the new doctrines without shocking the piety or rousing the hostility of Catholics. The Common Prayer, and infant head of the new Church pronounced it "to have been composed with the aid of the Holy Ghost, with one uniform agreement" (2, 3 Edward VI., c. 1), a statement not absolutely accurate, as eight bishops out of the eighteen on the committee voted against it. If any clergyman did not use it, or used any other form, he was for the first offence deprived of a year's income and imprisoned for six months; for the second he lost all preferment and was imprisoned for twelve months, and for the third he was imprisoned for life. If any person ridiculed the Book, he was fined £10 on the first conviction, £20 on the second, and on the third deprived of all his goods and chattels, and imprisoned for life. Such was the freedom of conscience, the religious liberty granted by the gentle Reformers who freed man's intellect, etc., from the fetters of Rome. Though in this first book of Common Prayer there were many new things, much that was Catholic was retained, but it was soon discovered that this new gospel according to Cranmer savoured too much of the errors of Rome; and within four years, though it had been adopted "by the aid of the Holy Ghost," it was suppressed, and another and absolutely contradictory edition substituted by the aid, it was said, of the same Divine Spirit! "The Eucharist was now no longer the Body and Blood of Christ; by the magic touch of an Act of Parliament it was transformed into 'mere creatures of bread and wine.'" (Bilsborrow.) The English Parliament seems to have had no misgivings about its divine authority; it was well qualified to make a new church after proclaiming that the Church founded by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity had been drowned in damnable idolatry for eight hundred years. Under the next English Protestant Pope the Prayer Book was altered again, and fining and imprisonment again employed to force it on the nation. Even to speak disrespectfully of this revised Anglican Gospel ensured fining and imprisonment to the guilty person. In 1566 the men of the new doctrines presented a petition to the head of their Church for the destruction of altars, as they were "figurative of the Mass and the Real Presence." "Minister," says Latimer, "is a more fit name than priest, for the name of priest imports that sacrifice"; and Ridley: "The

use of an altar is to make sacrifice upon it, and the use of a table is to serve for men to eat upon."

So the altars were thrown down and the tables set. The fact and the language of these apostles of the English "Reformation," with all that it implies, is commended to the consideration of the Catholic, not Roman, party in the Anglican Establishment. The very names of Christmas, Candlemas, Michaelmas and Martinmas tell us what was the faith of England long ago, ere "reformers" had discovered that Mass is "a diabolical profanation of the Lord's Supper," "gross idolatry," and that "he who tastes of it is mad." The English people gave undeniable evidence of their belief that a new religion was being established when in 19 counties they rose in insurrection and demanded the restoration of the old that they should have back the Mass, that the monasteries should be given back to their owners, the monks, and that they should recover possession of their altars and their churches. A massacre was the answer; and a thanksgiving service was held by a Protestant divine amidst the stiffening bodies of his Catholic countrymen; a proceeding worthy of the work. "Began by Henry the Murderer of his Wives, Continued by Somerset the Murderer of her Brother, and Completed by Elizabeth the Murderer of her Guest." The result of it all is only too evident today. "Division, sub-division, religious anarchy and infidelity are the natural offspring of the principles of the Reformation." Its descendants cannot unite and form one fold, because they have left the guidance of the one Shepherd. Men are no longer satisfied with denying this or that Catholic doctrine, but reject the entire code of Revelation, and to stem the stream of irreligion and infidelity, Protestants, not a few of them rationalists, meet together in synods, etc., and try to make up their differences by discussion and concession, and the press makes us familiar with the contradictions and distorted views which characterize such gatherings. Meanwhile the sick world grows worse. There is but one Physician Who can cure its disease of intellect and will, but one Voice that can still the storm, the Voice that the winds and sea obey. As in ages gone by its authoritative accents are heard clearly and distinctly above the tempest, and now as then, heard from Peter's boat. Not even a majority of votes in Parliament can silence it. The Catholic, not Roman, Anglican should ask himself if it can possibly be a Church made in England in the sixteenth century by votes "in the house" that the Founder of Christianity had commanded him to hear, on pain of him being classed with the heathen and the publican.

HISTORIC CONVENT
TO BE RESTORED

Information which reached Washington recently that the Spanish Government is soon to return to the Franciscan Fathers the convent of La Rabida, in Palos, Spain, is of special interest to the people of the western hemisphere because it was from the monks of this monastery that Christopher Columbus got encouragement and assistance that finally enabled him to embark on his famous voyage of discovery.

The convent was confiscated by the Spanish Government in 1835, following a savage outbreak against the Church, and the murder of many priests. It underwent a considerable restoration in 1855, but in the main is the same as when Columbus and his son, Diego, were guests within its ancient walls. Since 1855 the convent has been used as a public museum. It became a Franciscan monastery in 1261, and remained in charge of the Friars Minor until seized and turned to secular use by the Spanish authorities.

It was at La Rabida that Father Juan Perez, friend of Columbus, was guardian. This Father Perez, who, by the way, is generally believed to have celebrated the first Mass in the New World in the first church to be erected in this hemisphere, had formerly been royal accountant at the Spanish court, but had entered the Franciscan order and was ordained some years before Columbus made his acquaintance. After his ordination Father Perez became Queen Isabella's confessor, but life at court he found distracting and he asked permission to retire to his monastery.

Columbus made his first visit to La Rabida probably in 1494 or 1495. Whether his purpose was to leave his son, Diego, in care of the monks there or to consult Father Antonio de Marchena is now a matter of speculation. Father Marchena was a cosmographer of note, and himself cherished the project of discovering a new world.

In writing to the Spanish king long after the first voyage, Columbus acknowledges his obligation and gratitude to these two Friars, who were among the few people that did not at first ridicule his project of sailing west to reach India.

After the commission appointed by King Ferdinand to inquire into the proposals of the great Genoan had reported adversely, and Columbus was on the point of leaving Spain to seek favor of Charles VIII, of France, he visited La Rabida. Father Perez dissuaded Columbus from his design of quitting Spain and urged him to appeal to Queen

Isabella. Ferdinand had already refused his assistance, but Isabella seemed not to have been approached. Father Perez was invited by the queen to Santa Fe, near Granada, and was accorded an interview. He eloquently presented the case of Columbus. The latter was then summoned by the queen, who heard his pleas and arguments. The sequel of his appeal is among the most important history of the world.

When Columbus was about to sail away from Palos with his three little ships—August 3, 1492—Father Perez was there to bless him and his fleet. Father Perez accompanied Columbus on his second voyage and on reaching

Haiti celebrated Mass at Point Cap-Haitien, December 8, 1493. The best historians agree that Father Perez became the guardian of the first convent which Columbus ordered to be built at Santa Domingo. Father Perez died some time prior to 1513, but neither the place of his death or the time of it is known.

La Rabida had been a Mohammedan place of retreat long before it became a Franciscan convent. The name, La Rabida, is Arabian for hermitage, and indicates its use during the Moorish occupation of Spain. It came into possession of the Knights Templar in 1200. They transferred it to the Franciscans twenty-one years later.—The Missionary.



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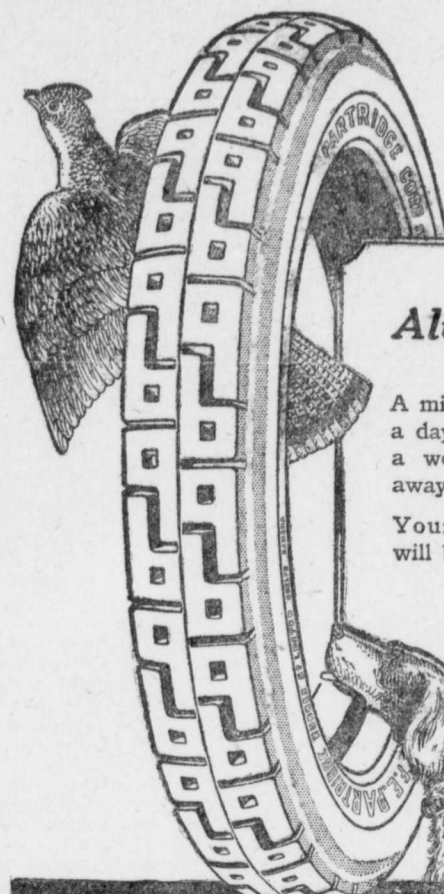
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