

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

By Rev. N. M. REDMOND
EASTER SUNDAY

THE RESURRECTION

"He is not here, for He has risen, as He said." (Matt. xxviii. 6.)
Last week, with heavy hearts and reflective minds, we passed from stage to stage of our Blessed Redeemer's Passion; we ascended in spirit the heights of Calvary and witnessed the great tragedy of His death. We meditated perhaps as never did we meditate before, on the grievousness of sin which demanded an atonement so great, on the justice of God which exacted an infinite satisfaction, and on the love of Jesus Christ for man which constrained Him to suffer so much for his redemption.

But vastly different is the sublime and glorious fact which presents itself today. So far removed is it from aught of a melancholy aspect as to be the very basis of Christian triumph and joy. For, to use the sentiments of St. Paul, if Christ had not risen, vain would be our preaching, vain would be our faith in the resurrection of the dead.

No sooner find our divine Saviour closed His eyes in death than His most blessed soul descended into Limbo, and after a brief interval, His virgin body was taken down from the cross and laid in the sepulchre. Human life had really gone out of the man-God, but the divine remained intact. He was God in death as well as in life. Hence He spoke as only God could speak: "I lay down My life, that I may take it up again" (St. John x. 17). His death then was in accord with His own disposition, and His resurrection could not be otherwise. His divinity never ceased its blessed union with His soul and His body, so when each had fulfilled its respective mission—the one in Limbo and the other in the sepulchre, He again took up forever the life which He had so recently laid down. The limit to His silence in death He had placed when He referred the Jews to the three days' imprisonment of Jonas as a figure, when He challenged them to destroy the temple of His body, and in three days He would raise it up, and when in fine He said to His disciples: "The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall rise again" (Matt. xiv. 21). His enemies as well as His friends "remembered that He had said this," as they evidenced in petitioning Pilate to place an armed guard at the sepulchre. But though they had seen Him exercise a power over life and death, which only God could command, as when He cured all manner of diseases, and raised the dead to life; though they had seen Him exercise a power which fierce armed forces could not withstand, as when with a word in Gethsemane He had sent them reeling backward to the ground; and though in fact all nature had testified that He was God, passion constrained them to deny that He was. "You have guards," said Pilate, "go guard the sepulchre as you know." The chief priests then having first ascertained that the body of Jesus was still there, sealed up the stone in the mouth of the sepulchre, and set the armed guards on watch. O foolish mortals! How vain is your presumption! Do you expect to hold by your seal, your armed forces, and wondrous vigilance, Him at whose death the earth shook to its very centre, within the narrow limits of a little sepulchre, contrary to His divine will and promise: Him, who is the Almighty Architect of the heavens above you, and the ponderous globe on which you stand; Him, who measures the vast waters of the abyss in the palm of His hand, the feeble echo of whose voice is as the most awful thunder, and the faintest glimmer of whose brightness is as the most terrific lightning; Him, who with a single word made all things leap into existence? O men! why content yourselves with one seal? Place ten thousand upon the sepulchre. Call around it all your armed legions, call around it all the armed legions of the great empire of Rome. Remember that it is not with a mere man, but with the great God of armies that your pride now presses you to contend, as of old, it swelled the ranks of the rebel angels. What then, O senseless and impotent mortals, will all avail you to render you the more ridiculous for time and eternity?

The Sabbath has passed, the midnight hour has come, and the heavens foreshadow by signs the glorious triumph of the Saviour. The festivities of Limbo are about to close, to continue above forever. "The Holy One of the Sepulchre," say the prophets, "must not see corruption." At last the hour has come, the earth gives its mighty heave, angels from on high descend, the huge stone rolls back into the midst of the terror-stricken though armed guards, the Saviour's most holy soul re-enters His virgin body, and gloriously and victoriously He bursts forth from the sepulchre, and rises, "the first-fruits of them that sleep." The terrified guards ran to their masters and made known the Almighty's work. But hardened and stupid to the last, they bethought themselves that by avarice they had corrupted the perfidious disciple who had sold the Saviour into death, and now by the same means they might pervert the first witnesses of His Resurrection. "We will pay you what you will," they said, "if you will give out that while you were asleep, His disciples came and conveyed Him away."

What detestable malice! what blind stupidity! To bring forward as evidence sleeping witnesses.

After our divine Saviour had placed the climax to the proofs of His divinity, and that of His doctrine by His most glorious resurrection; after He had conquered sin, death, and hell by again assuming the life which they seemed to have forever taken, He manifested Himself to His disciples. Thus He continued to do for the forty days of His glorified state on earth. "He showed Himself alive to them" after His passion, by many proofs, for forty days, appearing to them and speaking of the kingdom of God, and eating with them" (Acts 1. 3.).

How great the contrast! But yesterday an awful sensation of grief had possession of the Christian world, and our mother, the Church, had on her weeds of widowhood. Today the Christian world rings with intense joy, and our mother is robed in her utmost pomp. The world wide wall of the divine widow of yesterday has given place to the world-wide peals of her triumphal joy today. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein," is the inspired message which she delivers to her children. Can you respond, my brethren? You can, if by a good Easter confession you have risen from sin and tepidity, if the life of grace in your souls honors the glorified life of your risen Saviour, if the fealty which you have sworn is never again to sink into the tomb of sin. Rejoice, then, ye who have risen from sin, rejoice ye who live the life of grace, and say once for all in your joy, that hell's guards shall never again surround you in the grave of sin. "You are now risen with Christ; seek then the things that are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

TEMPERANCE

SAVING "PA" FROM THE DANGER ZONE

(A TRUE STORY)

The rain was coming down in torrents when big Jim Reynolds came out of the Works with his pay envelope in his hand, and his eyes fixed on the gleaming lights of the saloon on the corner. There were three saloons between the Works and Jim's home—"The danger zone," his wife called it. If Jim went by one safely, there was a second and a third to tempt him. Tonight the one nearest the Works drew him. Just as he was about to take the crossing, a little figure, covered down by a big umbrella, slipped from the shadow of the gate, and bore down upon him with a cheery "Hello! Pa!" Jim turned sharply. "What in Jim brought you out this night?" he growled.

The umbrella dropped back a bit, and a little pink face, with a smile dimpling around the mouth, turned to the big, grimy man. "I brought you the umbrella, Pa."

And then the smile broke into a laugh, in which the father joined against his will. He had never used an umbrella in his life. But Jenny was great on finding excuses for meeting him on pay night. The umbrella joke put him in good humor.

"Here, you cut along home," he ordered. Jenny drew in closer to him and slipped her hand in his pocket. "You come too, Pa?"

"No I won't, till I'm good and ready. Be off with you now. I'll come soon—maybe."

Jennie tipped the umbrella away back, and smiled her brightest: "Pa—please—give me your envelope." "Not on your life," he countered. "I know that was what you came after."

"How much is in it, Pa?" "Thirty-seven! Over-time, you know, kid." Then, regretting his boast, "See here Jennie, you keep your mouth shut to your mother."

"Let me take it to her, Pa. Oh, but you are smart to make all that in one week."

They had passed the first saloon. Jennie began again: "That's an awful lot of money, Pa. Let Ma see it altogether."

"Well here—take it, quick," Jennie reached out eagerly, nearly letting go of the umbrella in her rush. But her father drew back, and made to open the envelope.

"Oh, no, Pa! Please, Pa! Don't break it." The smile was gone. The upturned face was twitching as if tears were near at hand.

"Here, you sick little beggar, take it. But I'm not going home all the same."

They had passed the second saloon. Jennie tucked the precious envelope safely away. She was having wonderful luck tonight. That was because they had prayed so hard. She said another little prayer, and changed her tactics.

"You'll miss a swell dinner, Pa," she said. "Ma said: 'Tell your Pa I have a piping hot dinner for him—and a bottle of beer on the ice.'"

They were nearing the third saloon. Big Jim wavered. He was fond of his wife and the children, and he could almost sniff the dinner, but the saloon drew him strongly. His thirst for a glass was keen now. Jennie slipped her hand into his.

"Ma says if there was no saloons you'd be a boss, Pa." "Your ma has you well coached—An' she's right, kid," big Jim conceded. "I might have been a boss only for the booze."

A hot wave of wrath swept over him. He was angry at the saloons

and at himself. Before it was spent Jennie had him past the third saloon, and headed for home. An automobile flashed by, filled with prettily dressed children, laughing and happy. But drenched little Jennie felt no envy. She was happy too. She had the envelope, and "Pa" was safe for another week.—Sacred Heart Review.

GENERAL INTENTION FOR APRIL

RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XV.

CHARITY IN THE PRESENT WAR

Charity in war time, in the sense obvious to most of us, is the virtue which urges us to console the afflicted and find food for the hungry. War brings in its train evils so dreadful that they appal us, misfortunes so great that they excite our sympathy; what we do to lessen the physical and moral sufferings caused by War must necessarily spring from hearts stirred by that charity which, in the language of Scripture, "opens her hand to the needy and stretches out her hands to the poor." Charity has a wider field of action in war-times than in times of peace; the opportunities for exercising it are greater because those who can profit by it are more numerous, and are real victims of that "cruelty which byeth conquest at the dearest price."

But leaving aside for the moment this concept of the virtue, which springs spontaneously to one's mind when so many countries are on the verge of famine, perhaps, the highest form of charity we could exercise at the present time is to pray for the allayment of that spirit of hatred, spite and ill will which is being so sedulously fostered in the press, on platforms, and even in pulpits, in various countries. The nations at War are all fighting for justice as they understand it, and are doing their best to starve and slay each other in their efforts to obtain it. We are witnesses of a slaughter which is being carried on in all ruthlessness; but charity, which is "patient and kind," cannot justify us in the campaign of hatred which is being waged against an enemy whose principles we impugn, whose methods we abhor, but whose fighting capacity we have long ago learned to respect. Undoubtedly the only object the blatant factionists in the press, and elsewhere, have in view is to excite the warlike instincts of men to urge them to fight for what they consider justice, but it is surely neither reasonable nor charitable to appeal to the vile passion of hatred to urge men to fight for justice. It is paying a doubtful compliment to humanity to make the people of one nation hate those of another in order to convince them of the justice of their claims. When we are persuaded that our cause is just we do not need the element of hatred to justify the part we take in it.

Again, the normal state of a Christian nation is to be at peace

with its neighbor; it is not charity then to grow ecstatic over blood stained victories or to gloat over every newly formed scheme of annihilation. The methods of war and the results of war are to be deplored and the sort of charity that rejoices in such things is not the virtue that St. Paul praises: such a frame of mind is condemned by both reason and faith; it is subversive of the very essence of Christianity and of the natural exigencies of justice and humanity. No matter how guilty or how brutal we may suppose this or that nation to be, there is no one who does not feel how inhumane and anti-Christian is the language reeking with hatred which falls from the lips of public speakers, the prose which may be read in the newspapers and the ignoble cartoons which stare at us from their pages. We may reasonably wish to see an enemy reduced to a state where he can do no further damage, but our resentment should end there. If we allow hatred to influence us so far as to welcome schemes for the annihilation, not merely the political but even the economic annihilation, of an enemy, we demonstrate our folly; a nation cannot annihilate its neighbor, economically or otherwise.

Better show our charity by praying and working for peace. If peace cannot be secured in this way, then let us fight for it, and fight manfully for the sake of peace. Charity does not look for peace at any price; it seeks a peace founded on justice and right, and it has a right to get this much. But let not hatred of the enemy whom we are fighting be our determining motive in seeking peace. Christian charity in time of war urges us to work and pray for peace, not a peace to be spent in organizing armies and building armaments, but a peace prompt, solid, equitable, permanent, a peace which will right wrongs, reconcile conflicting interests and reestablish among irritated and divided nations mutual confidence and good will. It is charitable to long for the triumph of Christianity, so that the doctrines of Christ, the only panacea for present day evils, may extend their empire over laws, morals, and institutions. This charity is conformable not only to the principles of faith and the Gospel, but also to the dictates of reason; and this, we feel, is what the Holy Father asks for in the General Intention for the present month. He wishes the nations at war to seek in union and justice some arrangement which will end as soon as possible the butchery which is dishonoring Europe; he begs them not to keep up this struggle for the vain honor of crushing, conquering or annihilating an enemy. As Catholics we may have to look for justice even on the battlefield, but not at the expense of charity. Charity should unite nations as well as individuals.

After having done our duty in this respect we may turn to that other form of charity which is to help those who suffer in soul and need on relentlessly for two and a half years; it has already made oceans of tears to flow; it is threatening to bring hunger and famine

into millions of homes. Those whose hearts have been pierced with sorrow by sad news from the Front have a right to our sympathy, and in giving it generously we are exercising one of the noblest forms of charity. It is a charity that costs little but gives consoling results. The kind word offered to a wife or a mother who has a husband or a son lying somewhere under the sod in France or Flanders or the promise of a prayer for his soul, soothes her grief and makes her feel that we share it with her. In such cases our charity does double service. By our kind words and our sympathy we console the living, and by our prayers we help those who have given up their lives at the call of duty. Their courage deserves at least the tribute from us. We cannot bring them back to this world, but we can wish them well in the world they have entered. How consoling are the doctrines of the Catholic Church.

The final call on our charity is to help to keep away hunger from the homes of those who are fighting in the trenches of Europe. Many of those men left behind their wives and little children who are unable to help themselves. It is not hard to imagine the feelings of a soldier in Europe who realizes that his own at home in Canada are in want; and taking the human heart as we know it we must admit that there is nothing more liable to take the vim out of a soldier's usefulness on the battlefield than to learn that his home is ignored or left in want by those for whom he is fighting. Happily, practical charity has not been lacking in this country. Millions have poured into our various charitable and patriotic funds and have been distributed in a judicious manner. But the prolongation of the War calls for further sacrifices. To cite one example. In a recent circular issued by the Canadian Red Cross Society, one of several charitable organizations called into being by the War, we are informed that this Society alone will need nearly a million and a half dollars to meet its expenditures for the present year. Other organizations are also feeling the lack of funds. We should put our shoulders to the wheel and make new efforts to meet the needs of the present crisis. Our soldiers are doing their duty in Europe; let us do ours at home.

These considerations may seem very foreign to the topics usually presented to the members of our League. But we should remember that we are living in abnormal times; we are passing through an era unparalleled in human history, and we need not be surprised if his children fighting in the opposing armies, appeals to our charity and good will to meet the spiritual and temporal requirements of the situation.

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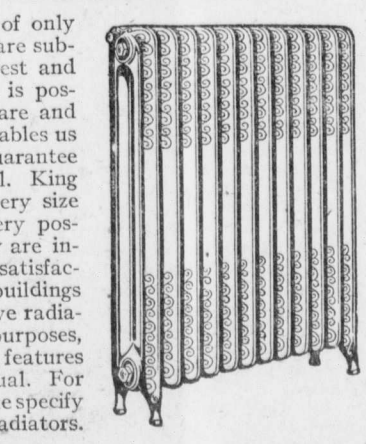
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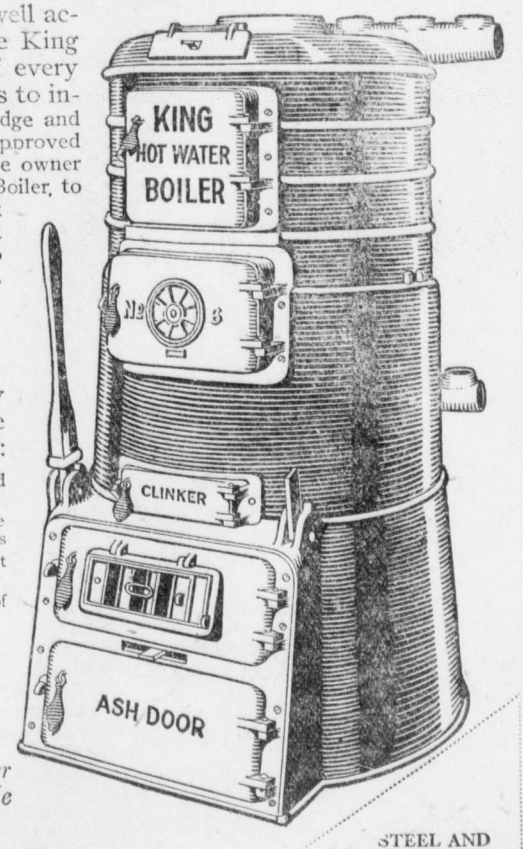


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