

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

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

TRINITY SUNDAY
OUR NEIGHBOUR

"Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given you." (Luke vi, 37, 38. From the Gospel of the First Sunday after Pentecost.)

Two most important works of mercy, my dear brethren, are spoken of by our Blessed Lord in this Gospel. To practise both is most necessary for each one of us, for only by fulfilling these works can we obtain from God the two corresponding graces, without which not one of us can be saved. "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven; give, and it shall be given to you."

Our duty is summed up in the one word, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." So we are compelled to forgive if we wish to be forgiven. And every one of us needs forgiveness. If we have sinned, we need forgiveness. And who is there without sin? "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John i, 8). "Who can say, My heart is pure; I am free from sin?" (Prov. xx, 9).

Moreover, as we forgive, in the same proportion we shall be forgiven. My dear brethren, how many of us are barring the door of heaven against ourselves through this very fault! Our Blessed Lord says, "Judge not, and you shall not be judged; condemn not, and you shall not be condemned; but forgive, and you shall be forgiven." We are far more ready to judge and condemn than we are to forgive. Naturally, it is hard to forgive, but by prayer, humility, meekness, we can learn, as the Saints did, to forgive from our hearts. But if in the past we have hardened our hearts by uncharitableness, envy, bearing malice, fancied grievances, what an obstacle we have built up to prevent our own souls from being forgiven! What a work we have before us!—a work impossible for us of ourselves, and only to be accomplished by His gracious help who bids us learn of Him, for He is meek and humble of heart.

There is no evading this obligation. It is present and always present, lying at the threshold of our heart. "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven." There it is, and no excuse can be framed for us to escape from it. The Master has laid it down, and we must obey.

How indignant Almighty God must be when He finds us hesitating about it, and complaining that it is hard. Hard, and this from sinners, who should exult for joy that there is a loophole for them by which to escape from the judgment. Forgive your neighbour, and the Good God has promised to forgive you. And you think it hard, the little you have to forgive. Look at the enormity of that for which we have to pray for forgiveness—mortal sin, a willful, deliberate, and grievous offence against the Majesty of God. Measure its malice by what it did; it crucified the Son of God. Measure it by what it does—plunges wretched souls, who will not forgive, that they be forgiven, into the fire of hell. Humbly, and in the fear of God, let us pray day by day for this virtue of forgiving our neighbour from our heart, that so we may escape the wrath to come.

The second work of mercy spoken of by our Lord is, "Give, and it shall be given to you." My dear brethren, what is there that we have not received from God? And how much more do we still hope to receive from Him? Time, that we may not be cut off in our sins; His grace—faith, hope, love; the Sacraments of the Church, final perseverance, and a holy death—these and a thousand other favours we ask the merciful God to give us. When we pray we are veritable beggars, knocking at the door of our heavenly Father: If He refuses, to whom shall we go? We are destitute and powerless of ourselves. And He will be deaf to us, and He will refuse us, prostrate and in tears though we may be, unless we remember one word, one blessed word that He has said: "Give, and it shall be given to you." "Give" is the golden key that opens the treasure-house of God. "Give," and the Almighty cannot refuse you when you pray and beseech of Him.

Is it not plain and evident what God would have us do? There are the poor, the sick, neighbours in distress and sorrow, our children or aged parents, as the case may be—yea, and the dying and the souls in Purgatory, all asking help from us. It is not necessarily money that they need—though in that case it is often the poor who are the most generous—but kindness in word and deed, patience, good example, prayers, remembrance. As we treat others, and give them of our means and neighbourly love, so God will treat us. Listen to the words of the Scripture, and you will understand the spirit that should animate you. "Give alms out of thy substance"—thus Tobias admonishes his son—and turn not away thy face from any poor person, for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability, be merciful. If thou hast much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity. For alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God to all them that give it." (Tobias iv, 7-12). "He that is inclined to mercy shall be blessed; for of his

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bread he hath given to the poor." (Prov. xiii, 9). "Shut up alms in the heart of the poor, and it shall obtain help for thee against all evil." (Ecclesi. xxix, 15).

"Give, and it shall be given to you." Oh, the mercy of God! the little we have to give and the greatness of that which God gives to us! A little bread, a few pennies, a kind word, an hour spent with the sick and the dying, is all that we can do. But the Lord blesses it, and a good conscience and the peace of God, and graces innumerable, and plenteous redemption and life everlasting are God's generous return.

DEMOCRACY ON ITS KNEES

IN NOTRE DAME DE PARIS

ADMIRALS, GENERALS, PREMIERS AND PRIVATES WITNESS WONDERFUL PROCESSION UNDER AUSPICES OF K. OF C.
(By Robt. W. Egan, Knights of Columbus Secretary)

Notre Dame Cathedral venerable in gray old age was the scene of a new ecclesiastical achievement when seven thousand American soldiers were stirred in heart and soul by what they saw, felt and heard while paying homage to the memorials of Our Saviour. The mothers back in America will thank God that their soldier sons were extended the grace to kneel and kiss a piece of the true Cross of Christ; to kiss the actual Nail which penetrated the flesh of their Saviour and to kiss the Crown of Thorns.

Thousands of miles from home on Tuesday of Holy Week men in khaki heard of the invitation by the Knights of Columbus to appear at Notre Dame and assist in the service of veneration of Sacred Relics. It was expected many would come to perform an act of piety; that others would appear out of curiosity, but no one anticipated that a scene would be enacted which will live with the hallowed memories of this mammoth and magnificent Temple of God.

They came from every part of the A. E. F. in France and Germany. They included Catholic and non-Catholic Chaplains, military men of every rank, leaders in society. One of the first distinguished guests to greet a Knight of Columbus usher at the door of the Cathedral was Admiral Benson, U. S. N. Prominent Catholics of France knelt with our doughboys who have helped to preserve perpetual peace for posterity.

Long before three o'clock when the service of veneration began, Notre Dame was crowded to the doors. Many had their first glimpse of this renowned sanctuary, where saints have died and sinners have been converted; whose walls, arches and stately carved columns have witnessed the most marvelous and historic scenes of centuries. They were within the sacred precincts of a temple of worship teeming with the important epochs of eight hundred years. They were facing an altar before which kings have been baptized. Monarchs newly crowned, have walked in all their majesty amidst the pomp and splendor of Church and State ceremony where American soldiers prayed today. Within this sacred sanctuary have been heard the lamentations of a nation in despair and the "Te Deum" of a multitude when France was victorious. Genius has found inspiration for song and story, poem and praise in this stately pile of stone—the perfection and triumph of Gothic art in architecture. The people of France, nearly all wearing mourning, stood in aisles as a ribbon of black surrounding the khaki of the American soldiers. The colors of our country unfurled between flags of the Allies were above the altar where a shaft of vari colored light was sent by the sun through rose-stained glass as Nature's offering to a glorious scene.

With such inspirational environment an immense audience was prepared to worship God. Gradually the shadows in the church disappeared, as row after row of white electric bulbs penetrated the gloom. The illumination unfolded new beauty and made visible the graceful demeanor from remote parts between the high arches, pillars, towers, and niches of this great gray monument to our Lady of Paris.

What a scene of splendor! Reminiscing the passing of time from an old age of the church to the present day. Two centuries ago when the United States was struggling for independence, France was our ally. Today the bread upon the waters have returned,—the good seed sown by Lafayette was present in that American audience paying homage to the King of Kings in the sanctuary of the saints of France.

Notre Dame in gloom and darkness shelters the shadows of eight hundred years. Notre Dame illuminated absorbs the form of beauty, youth and faith.

These impressions were being absorbed when the rich melodious tones of the great organ high above the people resounded the prayer present in every soul. The sweet plaintive tones reaching high up toward God seemed to echo the silent prayers of the people. And then, from the sanctuary, the trained voices of France, male and female, singing sacred melody penetrated through the senses to the hearts of soldiers. "The Miserere" chanted by the choir of St. Germain, required no organ accompaniment. Hardly had the note vanished than a figure robed in scarlet appeared with official escort and passed down the aisle separating seven thousand American patriots. Cardinal Amette's face portrayed a welcome for the American guests. Opposite the pulpit he sat throughout the sermon, delivered by L'Abbe Flynn, Chevalier of the Legion of Honor of France a priest of Suresnes, and a patriot soldier of whom all France is proud.

"Amen" at the close of the sermon, was echoing throughout the church, when the venerable figure of Cardinal Amette was seen standing in his throne. With face animated and emphasizing his remarks by earnest gesture, he extended greeting to the assembled American soldiery whom he characterized as the Saviours of Democracy for their part in the final victory of the Allies against the domination of Prussianism in Europe. After this greeting Cardinal Amette bestowed his blessing.

With the procession of Sacred Relics came the great climax of the day's ceremonial. Before the altar appeared priests and prelates, monsignori, acolytes—all headed by uniformed custodians of the relics. Monsignor James N. Connolly, Vicar-General to the Catholic Chaplain Bishops U. S. Army and Navy Overseas jurisdiction, Chaplain E. March, his assistant and Rev. Father Coll, K. of C. Chaplain, had places of honor in the procession. Slowly they advanced down the centre aisle between the several thousand worshippers. Non-Catholics, but professed Christians, who came to see the Relics, finally remained to worship at the feet of their Dying Saviour. The procession was as a prayer in the sight of a kneeling and standing congregation. Large sheaves of palm carried by the acolytes afforded meditation on the triumphal journey of Jesus into Jerusalem, when the poor and the faithful publicly avowed Him a Saviour. As the journey of the marchers progressed and the relics of the world's great tragedy appeared in sight, there were few Catholic hearts that did not bow low in spirit before Calvary. From the organ loft a beautiful tenor voice seemed to express in song the interior thought of the worshippers "O Saviour, Hear Me." Parnell Egan a Knight of Columbus Secretary, tenor, never before sang so well. His voice conveyed the emotion and the inspiration of a scene which was entrancing.

Cardinal Amette walked with head bent low. The silence was intense and sacred, broken only by the hymn sung to God for all of us. Unconsciously, men dropped to their knees. Many were in tears. In the presence of the Crown of thorns they felt themselves at the foot of the Cross before that memorable day when Pontius Pilate washed his hands saying: "I am innocent of the Blood of this Just Man."

Who could pray in the presence of the Crown of Thorns and not recall the statement in the Gospel: "Gather together unto Him the whole Band; and stripping Him, they put a scarlet cloak about Him. And plaiting a Crown of Thorns, they put it upon His Head, and a reed in His right hand."

A sense of realization that our eyes were seeing the Crown which penetrated the brow of Jesus; that this Sacred Relic was actually passing in procession aroused the pious emotion of the spectators. This wonderful treasure was brought to Paris during the reign of St. Louis, who constructed the Church of La Sainte Chapelle in which to shelter it. How reverently it has been treasured throughout the ages! How tenderly has it been guarded over a period of many centuries! How wonderful for American soldiers to see it after 1900 years! In another crystal encasement, carriers bore a piece of the Holy Cross. This wood was part of the heavy burden under which Our Saviour fell three times before He reached the place of execution. This piece of wood is about seven inches long. It is in a wonderful state of preservation.

The Nail of the Passion was carried in procession by other bearers. Religious souls who have joined in prayers in Paris churches thousands of miles away thought of the Passion of Our Lord in a different way when they beheld these awful instruments for torture. The Nail, six inches long, capped with heavy iron, and shaped from a thickness of half an inch to a

sharp ugly point, was given by Charlemagne and preserved until 1790 in the Cathedral of St. Denis. Again the Lesson of the Cross was impressed in the presence of the memorial. As they took Jesus and led Him forth. And bearing His own Cross He went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew 'Golgotha'; where they crucified Him and with Him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst."

The silent, impressive group escorting the relics passed down the center aisle, encircled the church and returned to the main altar. Men bowed or knelt. Many men and women expressed emotion in tears. All felt the were in the Resurrection on that Day of Sacrifice when human souls were redeemed.

Following Benediction the privilege of kissing the Sacred Relics was granted the American soldier guests. Over five thousand men awaited their turn to kneel at the altar and press their lips against the crystal encasements containing the Nail, the Crown and the Wood as it was passed by the priest of Notre Dame, by every creed, including an admiral, a general, distinguished Frenchmen, women of high position in social life knelt meek and humble of heart alongside of doughboys to touch the relics associated with Christ Almighty's death.

After the veneration the Treasury Notre Dame was opened and thousands of soldiers were permitted to view the wonderful collection of historic jewels, vestments and antiques presented by kings, Popes and monarchs of the world. Their eyes were dazzled by the many jewel caskets given at different times by nations as repositories for the Sacred Relics exhibited throughout the service. They saw the Missals of the Mass used in the marriage ceremony of Napoleon the Third. The magnificent casket to carry the Crown paid for by the ladies of Paris and designed by Violet Le Duc was shown to the Americans. The collection includes the chalice of Pope Pius VII., contributed to Notre Dame by Napoleon First; coronation robe and cushion on which the Crown rested when Louis Eighteenth was crowned in Notre Dame Cathedral; a Crucifix of the thirteenth century contributed by the Duke of Northfolk, at one time owned by St. Thomas a Becket; the gold crosses of Pope Pius IX. and a magnificent monstrance presented by Napoleon; the chalice used to administer Holy Communion to Marie Antoinette and Louis the Sixteenth, the morning of their execution in 1793; the monstrance given by Louis Eighteenth to Notre Dame Church, studded with diamonds, rubies and emeralds. The vestments worn by Popes and the Bishops of Paris, and the great collection of cameos, bearing the portraits of 238 different Popes to the time of Leo the XIII. Every period of French history is shown in the drawers and compartments of the Notre Dame Treasury. Following this view, the soldiers passed to the rear of the Cathedral and marched about the structure. They had opportunity to study the beautiful and magnificent exterior view so often described by poets, who can best tell of the classic lines of this ancient and historical edifice.

At the time of War, of death, of cruelty, of suffering, of human misery, when the world is buried beneath the sorrows and terrors of the last four years, it was a wonderful thing—in Holy Week to attend this ceremony, in this world famous Cathedral, and in prayer and contemplation gather comfort and strength for the days to come from the lessons of our Crucified Saviour.

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THE AGREEMENT ON CHURCH AFFAIRS

FREEDOM OF CHURCH ASSURED BY NEW CONCORDAT
Catholic Press Association

London, March 30.—An important development has taken place in Switzerland regarding the relations between Church and State. The Cantonal Government of Lucerne has made a stipulation with the Ordinary of Basle and Lugano for a convention, which regulates the relations of Church and State. Article 1 of this Concordat recognizes the Catholic Church as an autonomous society governed by her own laws. Ecclesiastical superiors and the priests and communities, living under their authority, enjoy full liberty, and are assured of the protection of the State.

The direction of the spiritual administration is the exclusive affair of ecclesiastics. On the other hand, the laity shares in the administration of the goods of the Church. The inhabitants, who profess the Catholic religion, enjoy civic rights. The parish priest is by right, as representative of the Church, President of the Parish Council and assemblies. The formation of the clergy is the affair of the Bishop.

The Canton subsidizes the upkeep of the theological seminary. The professors are nominated by the Government in agreement with the Bishop; and they cannot teach without receiving the canonical mission from the Bishop. The Cantonal authorities undertake that religious instruction shall be given in all the colleges and schools, also that all books used in the schools, shall be free from anything which can wound either faith or morals. The diocesan authorities, communities and ecclesiastical establishments have the right to found and provide for schools of all degrees. The Government ap-

points the Canons, but according to the wishes of the Chapter, which elects its own provost and other dignitaries, whose appointments are confirmed by the Pope.

Article 22 is important. It declares that the right of property in ecclesiastical goods can be exercised by the religious corporations, associations and foundations, and that the goods of the Church must not be used for any other end than that for which they are destined. The direction of the foundations for Masses rest with the Treasurer of the Church. The churches, buildings of ecclesiastical benefices and conventional houses are exempt from taxation, also ecclesiastical funds, the revenues of which are used for the needs of religion, schools or charity.

All laws and ordinances, contrary to the articles of the Concordat, will be abrogated. This gives a general summary of the principal provisions of the Concordat.

The Canton of Lucerne forms a part of the Diocese of Basle. The ecclesiastical power is exercised by the Pope; and the Bishop is elected by the Cathedral senate.

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