

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST

THE LORD'S DAY

"And Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying: Is it lawful to lead on the Sabbath day? But they held their peace." Luke xiv, 3, 4.

God, in founding the world, established order in it. Any one contemplating the regularity and harmonious adjustment of the material world can not fail to be struck with wonder at it. How surely night succeeds day, and season follows season. The sun sets over the land we inhabit, certain to rise again; its rays give forth light, warmth and strength; we never doubt its beneficence. Never have we even thought that the morrow's sun would not rise. It seems an eternal persuasion in us that nature ever will act uniformly; nay, it seems almost as evident to us as that two and two make four. But we need not particularize in nature; all nature has its laws; all its parts have their laws. Many of these laws may not have been discovered as yet, but if the day comes when the majority of them will be known, it will be seen that there exists in them the same unchanging uniformity. Order is perfection, and God, the Infinite Perfect Being, has instilled some degree of order in all His works. This order is not infinite, but it is perfect. There can be nothing as perfect as God, but all His works have some of His perfection.

It was God's intention also to have this uniformity in the spiritual order. In the Old Law, as in the New, the truths He revealed were but the truths of this uniform order and perfection. What were these truths? They were truths about Himself and His works—especially His work in creating man and the universe, man's home. God Himself is perfect; without order there can be no perfection; without uniformity there can be no order. God created one man and one woman. They were to propagate human beings like themselves; such only could they bring forth. His order demanded this, and He made nature accordingly. Hence, we see nothing but order in God's works. How could the truths regarding them be otherwise?

As physically He established creatures in uniformity, so spiritually the laws governing them must be uniform. One could not say he had different obligations from another; he could not say that God did not endow him with an immortal soul; he could not say that God was different when He created him than when He created another; or that God was in a different mood when creating him than His mood when creating his neighbor. The nature of God is also perfect and unchangeable. Truths about Him are always truths, and are likewise unchangeable. God must not be worshipped today and disregarded tomorrow. One thing can not be believed of Him today and denied of Him tomorrow. There must be uniformity of belief, otherwise there is a lack of truth, in the creeds of man.

God would have this order observed even in regard to the worship we pay Him. We must serve Him and worship Him every day, it is true; but He has set aside a day for special worship. It is expressed in the commandment, "Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day." He wishes us to have a time for everything. He gives man six days of the week in which he is to gain sustenance for himself; the other day he must give to God. On that day he should forget, as much as possible, his worldly occupations, and remember his other obligations—service to God and the salvation of his soul.

The Pharisees spoken of in today's Gospel attempt to have Our Lord appear as disobeying this commandment of God regarding the sanctification of the Sabbath. Our Divine Saviour, in His manner of acting, gives us an excellent example to follow. We need to have before our minds every day of our lives.

The Law is the Law. The belief of the Pharisees or their ill-will can not excuse from its observance. Christ knew it was His Father's will that He cure this sick man. He knew it was no violation of the Sabbath; hence, He worked the miracle. In our own lives we are confronted by difficulties similar to those placed in the way of Christ. There is an unbelieving world that mocks at us, that questions our rights, that doubts our sincerity. In the face of all this, we must do our duty and do it fearlessly. Once we know God's command we know our duty, and no power on earth should prevent us from doing it. The Pharisees were not Christ's teachers; neither were they commissioned by God to interpret the Law. For this reason, if for no other, Our Lord disregarded protests entirely. When Catholics are confronted with a questioning mob, such as are their enemies, let them remember that God is their teacher; and that the Church is the interpreter of God's word and commands. Let them hear the Church, therefore, lending at the same time a deaf ear to their foes. They may pray for their enemies, they should pray for them, but never should they be influenced by them.

When, more than at the present time, were Catholics confronted by difficulties? The very trend of society is in a direction contrary to that of the path the Christian must follow. People are being persuaded more and more by the world's teaching, rather than by that of Christ. What will you say of the divorce courts? How common it is now to obtain a divorce and how easy! Did Christ make it so? Not He, but the world. He absolutely forbade total divorce. Now, when you are in difficulty, whom will you follow—Christ or the world? Your duty as a Catholic is to disregard total divorce absolutely. No law, no court established to grant divorces in the modern sense, is sanctioned by God. The prevalence of certain things in the world today is no justification for their existence. People should remember this always. The world in its misnamed "uplift movements" has discarded the doctrines of Christ and has substituted new ones, as if it were wiser than Our Saviour. No wonder we have divorces innumerable; no wonder they are prating about sex hygiene; no wonder children are growing so independent that we need courts to try them for their delinquencies! It would be impossible to begin to enumerate the abuses which have sprung up after Christ's law has been laid aside. You may say the world prospers, nevertheless. Yes, it thrives, but a great part of the world, like the Pharisees, is blinded by its own wisdom.

Let us, as Catholics, be led by Christ, be guided by Him, and be blessed by Him. Let us do our duty fearlessly, and that gentle voice will whisper in our inmost conscience: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Is this not better than to add our voice to the noisy din of a selfish crowd, and to follow the sound of an empty drum?

OLD MOTHERS

I love old mothers—mothers with white hair
And kindly eyes, and lips grown softly sweet
With murmured blessings over sleeping babes.
There is something in their quiet grace
That speaks the calm of Sabbath afternoons;
A knowledge in their deep unfaltering eyes
That far outstretches all philosophy.
Time, with caressing touch, about them weaves
The silver-threaded fairy shawl of age.
While all the echoes of forgotten songs
Seem joined to lend a sweetness to their speech.
Old mothers!—as they pass with slowtimed step,
Their trembling hands cling gently to youth's strength;
Sweet mothers! as they pass, one sees again
Old garden walks, old roses, and old loves.

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Sunday August 28.—St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, and one of the great doctors of the church, was born in Tagaste in Africa in 354. His father was a pagan, his mother St. Monica. He was reared a Christian, but not baptised when young. He lost faith and innocence and persisted in an irregular life until thirty-two. When converted he began to make amends for his wasted years and was consecrated Bishop of Hippo in 395. For thirty-five years he was the center of ecclesiastical life in Africa and a mighty champion against heresy. He died in 430.

Monday August 29.—The beheading of St. John Baptist on the request of Salome, daughter of Herodias, whom Herod, in defiance of all laws, had married despite the fact that she was the wife of his brother Philip, who was still living.

Tuesday August 30.—St. Rose of Lima, the first canonized saint of the new world, was born at Lima in 1586, she grew to great beauty, but fearing she might become vain she cut off her hair and blisters her face. She devoted her life to most severe penance and the Blessed Sacrament was her only food for long periods. She died in 1617 at the age of thirty.

Wednesday August 31.—Raymond Nonnatus, a member of the Order of Our Lady of Mercy for the redemption of captives, who being sent into Algiers to purchase slaves expended all his money and then gave himself into captivity as ransom for others. He encouraged the captive Christians and converted some of the Mohammedans. He was treated barbarously by the infidels. Finally he was released and on his return to Spain was nominated a cardinal. He died at Cardona on the way to Rome in 1240 at the age of thirty-seven.

Thursday September 1.—St. Giles, a noble Athenian, who could not find the solitude he desired in his own country. He sailed for France and chose a hermitage at the mouth of the Rhine. He was renowned for his sanctity and miracles, and great devotion to him has sprung up in France and England.

Friday September 2.—St. Stephen, King of Hungary. He rooted out idolatry, suppressed pagan rebel-

lions and founded many monasteries and churches. He had particular devotion to Our Lady, and died as he had wished on the Feast of the Assumption, 1088.

Saturday September 3.—St. Seraphia, virgin and martyr, born at Antioch, who disposed of her possessions, distributed her goods to the poor and sold herself into the voluntary service of a Roman matron, Sabina. She converted her mistress. Seraphia was condemned to be burned to death, but flames could not touch her and she was beheaded. Sabina met a martyr's death a year later.

GENERAL INTENTION
FOR SEPTEMBER

RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED
BY HIS HOLINESS POPE
BENEDICT XV.

OUR FOREIGN MISSIONS

Catholic missionaries claim the privilege of working for souls wherever souls are to be found. Obedient to the summons of their Divine Master to preach the Gospel to all nations, they have labored in the past and are laboring today in various parts of the world, where the victories of conversion gained by them have been marvellous. History records the fact that the millions won over by them to the true Faith rejoiced that they had found the way to heaven, just as the descendants of those millions continue to rejoice in the fact that they find in the bosom of the Church the source of eternal truth and the hope of eternal life.

And yet after nineteen hundred years of strenuous effort, and after miracles of zeal on the part of Catholic missionaries, it is sad to have to admit that there are hundreds of millions of the human race living today who have never had the Gospel preached to them and who have never received an invitation to enter the true fold of Christ. Does this mean that the value of human souls has depreciated in the mind of our generation? Or does it mean that missionary activity has lessened? Certainly not. At the present day, as in the past, there are thousands of heroic men and women devoting their lives to the conversion of pagans in foreign lands, armies of them who have given up home and kindred and have crossed oceans for the purpose of instructing and baptizing the heathen, and thus laboring for the extension of God's Kingdom on earth.

Why, then, is it that there are still more pagans than Christians in the world? It cannot be the fault of the Church or of the men who will that all souls be saved, because the Catholic spirit of zeal has grown less intense. Is it not rather because the harvest is so large for the number of reapers employed? A great deal of work is being done in our Catholic foreign missions; but the field is world-wide, and if the workers are not as numerous as they should be, it is because little is being done to augment their numbers; if results are not as satisfactory at the front as they might be, it is because those who are in the thick of the fight are not adequately supported by the people at home? It would seem that we who have received the gift of Faith are not thankful enough for it, and consequently do not manifest zeal enough for those who have not yet received this precious gift.

People who live in lands where Christianity is taught and practised often fail to realize that they have a duty to perform in favor of heathen missions. God made it a law that everyone should be interested in his equals (Eccl. xvii, 12), and this law of charity is all the more pressing when the neighbor is placed in great distress. But who are in greater distress than people who know not God? Who deserve greater sympathy from us than the millions of poor heathen who, because of their ignorance of the true God and of the precepts of His Gospel, are held not merely in the slavery of their passions, but even in the more odious slavery of Satan? To aid in the enlightenment of those unfortunate pagan millions is to fulfil one of the most important obligations of Christianity. When we fulfil this obligation we give God an agreeable testimony of our gratitude for the gift of Faith which we ourselves possess.

Three ways are open to us to help in the conversion of the heathen in foreign lands. The first one, possible to all, is to bring down the blessings of heaven on those who, while engaged in the work, are asking God to give efficacy to their labors and sufferings. Missionary activity is vain and sterile if grace does not make it fruitful. St. Paul declared, "I have sown, Apollo has watered, but it is God who gives the increase." (I Cor iii, 6.) One of the most powerful ways, therefore, of moving Him to grant fruitfulness of missionary labors in foreign lands is humble and persevering prayer. Normally speaking, it is the will of God that men be saved by the ministry of their fellow-men. Surely if there is an intention for which our prayer is assured of being listened to, it is that offered for the success of missions among pagan nations. While missionaries are laboring for souls in distant vineyards, Catholics at home should have their hands

raised in prayer, imploring heaven for their success. It was precisely to enable millions in every Catholic country to exercise this intercessory power that the work of the Apostleship of Prayer was founded, and, within the past two years Benedict XV has strongly urged all Catholics without exception to affiliate themselves to this Apostleship, so that the foreign missions might have the benefit of their intercession.

A second and more heroic way is to consecrate one's own life to the work. At the present time there are tens of thousands of devoted souls, among whom are not merely bishops and priests but even the laity of both sexes, Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods, living and laboring in foreign countries. These zealous men and women are at work instructing peoples for whom the faith is a new experience. They are gathering in souls one by one, and thus little by little widening the field of action which the Church is exercising in the world. But missionaries, like other people, grow old with fatigue and years, and they die and disappear, leaving their work incomplete unless there are other hands to take it up after them. It may seem heroic to give up all to go to work in the foreign mission field but hundreds of thousands have done it in the past, and what they have done others will do in the future.

The recent European War wrought havoc in the ranks of our Catholic missionaries, and the call is urgent for recruits to fill those depleted ranks. How many who read these lines will obey this call? Our Holy Father has issued a pressing invitation to the heads of religious orders and congregations, asking them to choose their subjects for foreign service. Home needs might suffer for the moment, but the considered religious superiors by explaining what they undoubtedly already know, that God would be generous with His graces, and that vocations for the field at home would not be lacking to replace those who were sent away.

Conformably to the wish of the Father of the faithful, various missionary centers are sending out appeals for recruits. It may never have dawned upon many a college student that the Divine Shepherd was expecting something noble from him, or that He was calling him to give his life to the apostolate in foreign fields. Some day or other, the student reads the story of some poor unknown missionary in China or Africa; immediately the spark is kindled in his soul. Vocations to missionary life are mysteries of grace. How often has the simple perusal of an article on missionary hardships and sufferings excited not merely admiration but also a spirit of generous emulation and self-sacrifice! At other times, it may be only a passing thought that comes unbidden to the young man, or a desire as yet dimly outlined, to work in this apostolate. But it is the Master who inspires both the thought and the desire; it is the Master who has begun to whisper to the soul; it is the Master inviting the student to consider as a serious proposition the call to enter the foreign service, and at the same time gently suggesting the means he must take to overcome all the difficulties and objections to the design of Providence over him. Happy the youth who is generous enough and brave enough to answer: "Lord, here I am! Do with me what Thou wilt for Thy glory!"

The third way to help the foreign missions is to contribute to their material support by almsgiving. The personal needs of our missionaries are not many, for foreign workers are men of abnegation who look to heaven for their reward; but they must live if they are to work; and if their work is to succeed, churches and mission houses and schools must be built, traveling expenses must be paid, and catechists must have their needs provided for. The missionary gives his life and his labor for the conversion of the heathen; is it fair to look for results if, through lack of support, he be handicapped in his work at every turn?

As a general rule, it is not the cheques of the wealthy that keep missionaries alive and active in foreign parts, but rather the pennies of the poor. One of the most powerful helps Catholic missionary effort can boast of during the past century is the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, which, for a whole hundred years, has gathered millions of dollars from the offerings of the poor. Why should not our wealthy Catholics also help in this important work? Wealth has its obligations as well as its privileges; the stewards of wealth in this world are apparently indifferent to the interests of Him who gave them their wealth and permits them to retain it. Unhappily, the solidarity which all Catholics should profess in this important matter of helping foreign missions is made more speculative than practical; the triumph of Christ and His Church in this world does not appeal to them as it should. And yet St. John warns the rich: "He that hath the substance of this world and shall see his brother in need, how doth the charity of God abide in him?" The wealthy are not called upon to sacrifice their lives in the work, but they are called upon to sacrifice a part of their substance to help those who are doing the work. When they

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stand before the throne of God to give an account of their stewardship, they will undoubtedly be asked how much of their wealth they contributed to the work of saving souls.

Meanwhile all Catholics have opportunities to work for the spread of the Kingdom of God on earth. Prayer, personal sacrifice, almsgiving, will move the Divine Master to have mercy on the souls of pagans, and assure for them the light of Faith. Members of the League, who have only prayer at their disposal, know how they may help efficiently. If they are faithful in making the Morning Offering, all their prayers, works and sufferings have an intercessory power, the volume of which when directed into foreign fields will bring multitudes of poor pagans into the Church of God.

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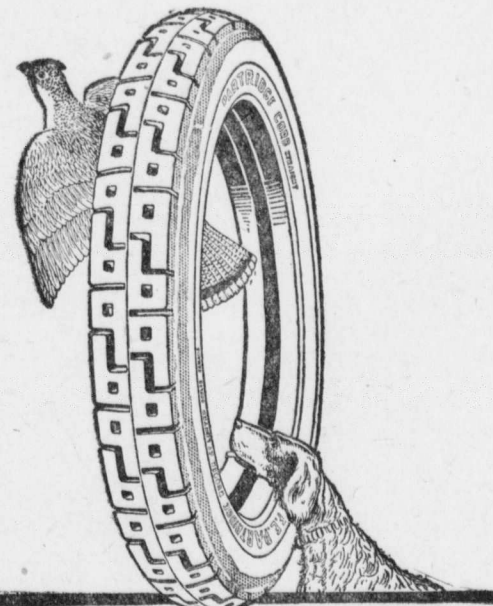
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