

FIVE-MINUTE SERMONS.

Fourth Sunday After Easter.

SUPERSTITION.
"Thou shalt not have strange gods before me." (Exod. xx. 2.)

There are some sinful practices forbidden in these words which is well to consider to-day, beside fortune-telling and the observing of dreams and omens. These are the use of charms, and the consulting of spirits, or seeking of the truth from the dead.

First, then, with regard to charms, amulets, and the like. Christians are unfortunately to be found, even at the present day, who use, in a superstitious way, and it may be for sinful purposes, things which can have no natural power to accomplish the end desired, but can derive any efficacy which they can be supposed to have from the devil, whose aid is therefore implicitly invoked by those who possess such things.

Let every one, then, understand that the use of these charms and amulets, though it might be even for a good object, as the preservation of one's life, is a great sin, and will bring a curse instead of a blessing on any one who perseveres in it. If any one, then, has any such object which he has been told will keep him from danger, give him success in his undertakings, or anything of that kind, let him cast it aside or burn it up without delay. Doubtless of course, it is to keep or use such objects with the hope of using harm to others, or of exciting evil passions in them; and the sin will in no case be avoided by the absurd character of the things employed in this way.

"But how," it may be asked, "about holy things, such as relics, medals, Agnus Dei, gospels, scapulars, and the like? Surely you would not call it superstitious or sinful in any way to keep or wear such things as these, or to think that they might do us some good, not only spiritually but even in the temporal order?" No, you are right about this. It is not sinful even to ask for miracles by the aid of things like those, which are either sacred by their nature or by the blessing of the Church. And the reason why it is not sinful is very plain. It is because God is invoked by means of them, and that any favors which are obtained by them will be for His honor and glory. Still, this should be so, they must be used with piety and devotion. To wear a scapular, for instance, simply as a sort of charm, without any desire or intention of honoring the Blessed Virgin by it, or to invoke her aid to escape from sin, would be not only useless but highly displeasing to her Divine Son. Almost every one feels this; few dare to profane holy objects of this kind by such use of them; those who have really given themselves up to the devil seldom try to protect themselves in his service by such means.

Well now, with regard to the other subject, that of consulting spirits, or seeking, as the Jewish law has it, the truth from the dead. You see it is no new thing, this spiritism, though the rapping and table-tipping business is rather a new form of it in these days.

It has been and is still very common among us, though it may be losing ground somewhat lately. But I do not think that Catholics have at any time been much interested in it, compared with some other people. With regard to the next line, we have our spirit-rappers to give us information. But still many Catholics have gone to their meetings, and would have little scruple in going now, just as they say, from curiosity. They think there is nothing in it; that it is only a more or less clever piece of jugglery. Now, in this they should understand that they are likely to be greatly mislead.

Jugglery and trickery it is sometimes, no doubt; but there is the gravest reason to suspect that in many cases the spirit actually has a hand in the matter. Not, it is true, the spirits of the departed who are invoked, but evil and lying spirits who personate them, and wish by information seeming to come from them to weaken or destroy our belief in the truth of revelation.

It is, then, no joking matter, but a very serious and dangerous one, to put one's self in the power and under the influence of these spirits from hell; and this is what one who goes to these spiritual seances, as they are called, may probably do. Remember, then, to have nothing to do with them if you value your immortal soul.

NATURE'S SPRING GARB.
No wonder that every one hails with delight the appearance of Dame Nature in her emerald Spring gown. After the long dreary winter when we have been wrapped and muffled up like mummies it is a treat to throw off heavy clothing and enjoy the mild air. Winter is specially trying in the country, where there are such long distances to travel and so much outdoor work to attend to. The cold seems even more penetrating than in the cities, and the question of suitable clothing is one of vital interest. Fur-lined coats are warm, but too heavy and cumbersome to move about in with comfort, to say nothing of the expense, and a FIBRE CHAM-ORIS interlining seems to be the best thing yet found for all-round satisfaction. It gives no weight or bulk and yet is absolutely wind and weather proof, and what's more, is cheap enough to be in every one's reach.

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OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

LILIAN AUBREY.

BY J. F. FITZGERALD.

It was a lovely morning in May; the air was redolent with the perfume of roses, lilies, and violets; bright groups of merry children played, running hither and thither through the beautiful grounds attached to St. Cecilia's, the gray walls of which could just be seen through the foliage of the stately trees, street over and anon by the gentle, rippling breeze.

Sitting alone at some distance from the gay, thoughtless children, whose mirth awakened no echo in her heart, was a lovely girl, graceful and elegant in her carriage, with a pure, pale Patrician face and a wealth of wavy, golden hair; but in the tender blue eyes there lurked, unmistakably, the shadow of a sorrow.

As she sat there wrapped in her own thoughts she did not hear the footsteps of the gentle, pale-faced Sister who came slowly and noiselessly down the pebbly path, plying her knitting needles industriously as she walked.

"Alone, my child?" she said, as she reached the young lady. "And why so?" continuing, without giving her time to reply. "I am really ashamed to say that, though introduced to you upon the day of your arrival, I have forgotten your name."

"It is Lilian, Sister—Lilian Aubrey," she answered, rising and bowing gracefully, then timidly extending her hand.

"Be seated, dear," said Sister Blandine, "and I will sit here with you for awhile. I fear that you are not well, my child, you are so pale and thin." "I am well, dear Sister, quite well." Then, after a moment's hesitation, she added: "We have some times that we may not tell, heart woes, Sister; did you ever hear of such?" and she smiled faintly.

"My child," replied Sister Blandine with a world of pity in her soft, brown eyes, "our sweet, merciful Lord has said, 'Beware of one another's burdens,' and I think if we fulfilled better this divine precept the loads of all would be made lighter; so do not hesitate to pour all your sorrows into my heart, my dear child, for I can at least sympathize with you and pray with you for strength to bear whatever crosses our Lord has seen fit to lay upon your young shoulders."

"May I really tell you my troubles, Sister? May I tell you all? It seems to me that a load would fall from my heart if I could unburden it to some kind, sympathetic friend."

"Yes, tell me all, Lilian, and be assured that your confidence will be a sacred thing to me."

"Well, dear Sister, I am an orphan. I was educated in a convent far away from here. I left there but two brief years ago, a happy, gleeful girl, with health, Sister, an elegant home, where I am surrounded with everything that is beautiful and luxurious; I have a good, kind uncle for a guardian, who gratifies, as far as he can, my every wish. I entered society the winter after I left school at the age of eighteen, and, of course, had suitors, as all young ladies in society have; but I was indifferent to them all until I met one."

"She could not speak his name, but after a momentary pause, continued: 'He was noble and honorable; so congenial to me in every way, but one; I knew that he was not a Catholic when I met him, and soon learned that he was not a member of any church; but knowing how great his love for me was, I felt sure that he would, without persuasion, be brought to investigate our holy faith, and I had not the slightest doubt as to the result. He accompanied me to church one day, and upon some inquiry he made after me, he told me that he had been brought to know and love our faith, and finally to embrace it."

"I shall never forget the agonized expression of his face as he answered, 'I would that it could be so, Lilian; but if this is necessary to our happiness, then I would that we had never met, unless I could bear all the pain of parting, for, Lilian, I would gladly give my life to spare you one moment's pain—believe me, I would—but I feel that in all honor I must tell you now that I, alas! am an infidel.'"

"I must have turned deadly white. I felt as if that instant I had become petrified. He sprang toward me. I motioned him away. 'Did you not know that a Catholic could never wed an infidel?' I asked."

"Lilian, I thought not of it; only lately I began to fear it, but thought if I promised solemnly never to tamper with your faith it would be sufficient."

"Rising, I drew my ring from my finger and handed it to him, saying, 'It can never be, then, parting, for the drawing-room and went up to my room. When my maid came up she said I was in a high fever, and assisted me in undressing. The doctor was sent for, and from that night I knew nothing for weeks. I had brain fever, the doctor said, and at one time he had little hope of my recovery. When I was at last fairly convalescent my letters were given me. There was one from him saying that his anguish and remorse were unendurable; that he could never forgive himself, but he humbly prayed my forgiveness, assuring me that he could never marry another—that he would never love any other."

"I wrote only a few lines in reply, assuring him of my entire forgiveness."

Here her voice failed her, and rising, she threw herself on her knees beside the Sister and buried her face

in her lap, then burst into a flood of tears.

The good Sister let her weep untrammelled for a few moments, then put her arms around her and pressed her to her heart; lifting her head, she said, "Sister, these are the first tears I have shed since that sad day."

"Well, it will do you good to weep, my child; but now, dear, listen to me: you must not grieve as one without hope. You have proved to our Lord that you love Him above all things; you have sacrificed all most dear to you on earth for your faith, and now do you think our Lord will allow you to outdo Him in generosity? Believe me, my child, in His own good time He will lift this cross from your shoulders, will remove this weight of sorrow from your heart. All things are possible to Him, dear; He can soften the most obdurate hearts; can enlighten the darkest minds. Now, hear me; I, too, made a sacrifice once that I hope was pleasing to God, and now we will unite in prayer to His Sacred Heart for the conversion of the one you love, and pray with faith and confidence, dear child, for prayers, and tears never fail to move that merciful Heart."

As the kind Sister concluded, there was a faint smile on the tear-stained face as she said, "O, Sister, and do I bid you hope, Lilian, in the Sacred Heart?"

"How good God has been to send me to you, Sister, I was so utterly desolate and hopeless. After my recovery my uncle wished me to travel with him, but I knew that I could not enjoy traveling, and hearing of your beautiful convent through a friend, I begged her to write and persuade your good Mother to receive me for a year as a parlor boarder, and what a happy thought it was, for you have comforted me already."

As the months rolled on, Lilian grew stronger and more cheerful, and profited much by the peaceful hours passed in the good Sister Blandine's company, but as Lilian improved in health, the gentle Sister visibly declined, which was a source of great sorrow to her.

One day as she sat looking at her with brimming eyes she said: "O, Sister, if I could only do something for you it would make me so happy."

"Well, be happy, then, dear child, for you are doing very much for me; you are telling me every day how much I help and comfort you, and you do not know how much happiness it gives me. It is true I know that I shall not be with you much longer, but I know you will be willing for me to go to heaven, where I hope to go when our dear Lord calls me, and where I can even help you more than I can here."

"But, dear Sister, how can I ever do without you? I will be so utterly alone."

"Our Lord will not leave you alone for long, my child. Be assured that when He takes me He will send you some one who will more than supply my place," said the Sister, smiling.

"And now, Lilian, my last prayer on earth will be for the conversion of your friend. You have never told me his name."

"How ungrateful in me, dearest Sister, after all you have done for me and for me. His name is Guy Clitheroe," said Lilian with a blush. It was the first time she had ever breathed his name, except in prayer, since they parted.

"Well, my dear child, be assured that our dear Lord will not allow such a man to remain in darkness; but you must have patience, dear; you must be patient and humble, and I know you try to be both."

The winter passed. After Christmas Lilian saw but little of her friend, now grown so very dear to her; though she was allowed to spend a few moments with her every day, she was too weak to talk much. But though Lilian grieved at the thought of parting from her, Sister Blandine forbade her to be sad, saying that it would make her feel so badly, and that really she had no cause for sadness, so she tried to be brave and cheerful for her sake.

And now it was May again, and though the roses blushed and lilies and violets filled the air with their fragrance; though the birds sang sweetly and the sun shone brightly outside, in the dim convent chapel there was a solemn scene.

Before the altar rail there was a lowly bier; the sombre draping of the altar, the glow of the waxen tapers, the profound quiet that reigned, all told of the presence of death. The sweet, gentle, humble, self-sacrificing Sister, who had been dying slowly for weeks, was at last at rest—at last in the happy possession of her eternal reward.

Near the bier, on the altar step, bowed low in prayer with tear-stained face, yet with her heart filled with a strange and almost undefinable hope and peace, knelt the gentle girl who had so loved the dead. Somehow, she felt nearer to her than ever and wondered if heaven could be very far away.

As she knelt thus in prayer and silent communion with her friend in heaven, she heard a step that made her heart give a sudden bound, and as she raised her head with a half-surprised, half eager, expectant expression in her beautiful eyes, a hand was laid tenderly on her head, and in answer to her questioning gaze Guy Clitheroe knelt down by her side and made the sign of the cross, then taking both her hands in his he bent his head low over them, and there they knelt for some moments in mute thanksgiving, and Lilian knew the Sacred Heart had heard her friend's last prayer. It all seemed at once so extraordinary and yet so natural that they should be

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brought together so. How merciful and loving is not the Heart of Jesus! how abundantly does He not reward even our least sacrifices made for His love!

Hand in hand they walked through the grounds and sat down on the rustic bench where one short year ago the sweet, gentle Sister, now sleeping so peacefully in the chapel, had promised Lilian, in the name of the Sacred Heart, that He would give the loved one back to her in reward for her fidelity to Him.

As Lilian related all that had happened since they parted, they wept happy, grateful tears together, feeling that the dear friend now in heaven was sharing their happiness.

Mr. Clitheroe in traveling through Italy had met a holy and learned priest, with whom he engaged in conversation, and, being much interested, accepted an invitation to visit him.

The rest is soon told. The good Father became so much interested in him that he offered sometimes the Holy Sacrifice for him, and frequent controversies and much reading finally, united to earnest prayer, resulted in his conversion.

After his reception into the Church he spent some days in Rome in fervent thanksgiving, and then traveled day and night until he reached Philadelphia, when, after making a hasty toilet, he called at once at the house of Lilian's uncle.

It was only then that he heard of her illness, when, securing her address, he lost not a moment in seeking her.

How wonderful are God's ways, and how merciful He is in His dealings with those who love Him and trust in Him!—Church News.

DO YOU SAY YOUR MORNING PRAYERS?

The nature and necessity of prayer point out that morning is the most suitable and proper time to pray. It is true that God is both willing and ready to hear our prayers at all times when offered with the proper dispositions.

"I will pray," says the prophet, "and He shall hear my voice." But in the morning is found that freedom from distraction which the after occupations and business of the day do not guarantee. And if prayer is to be offered with attention, if prayer must be free from all voluntary distractions in order to be what it really is—"an elevation of the soul to God"—morning is the most fit and proper time to pray. Hence, the saints and beloved of God have never neglected morning prayer.

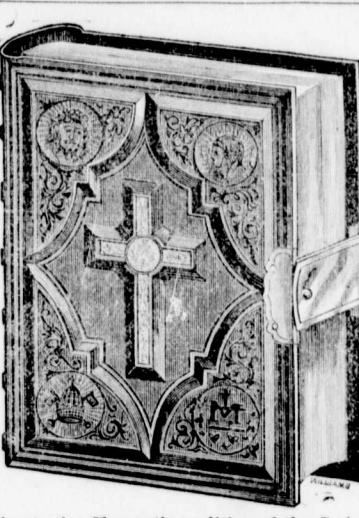
Our mother the Church wishes to encourage her children in the practice of saying their morning prayers. To her priests and religious, who are obliged to recite the divine office, are invitations of this kind: "Now that the day has dawned, let us adore God and pray to Him." "Away with sleep, let us rise quickly and seek God in the night, as the prophet says, 'an elevation of the soul to God'—morning prayer."

What more does the Christian need than this example? If the example of Christ Jesus moves him not to raise his hands "early" in prayer, what can?

Prayer is a necessity for us in order to preserve and keep from sin. In what time, then, is it more necessary than at the beginning of the day? Have we not passions to overcome, temptations to resist, the occasion of sin to avoid, the allurements of the world to guard against every day of our lives? How, then, shall we resist sin and the occasions of sin that surround and beset us each and every day of our lives, if the morning light sees us not at prayer? What is the strength of man if the grace of God assist him not when tried by strong temptation or thrown among the occasions of sin? Does not the Sacred Word compare it to tow before the fire, which feeds rather than resist the flames. Those, then, who commence the day with morning prayer, devoutly and piously said, will have the advantage over every enemy of their soul. In the words of one of the Fathers of the Church: "They make God their friend, and what enemy need they fear during the day?"

Morning prayer not only acquires for us the grace of God to keep us from sin during the day, but it also, if we live in a state of grace, merits for us additional degrees of grace and consequently greater glory in the kingdom of heaven. How? Because, if properly said, it directs all our actions, even the most indifferent, to God; and it is an article of faith that all our actions, when performed in a state of grace and directed to God, are meritorious of grace and everlasting happiness.

Many are the advantages of morning prayer. How many sins would be avoided? how many new graces would be acquired if only we said our



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morning prayers faithfully and with devotion? Never shall we know until we pass into eternity to stand before our Lord and Master, and then perhaps have to say to Him what Peter said of old: "Master, we have labored the whole night and have caught nothing."

But there is no neglect of duty for which we cannot give an excuse. Says one: "I sleep so long in the morning that I really forget my prayers, or I don't feel like saying them." No doubt. When sensuality is indulged by much sleep, the inconvenience of four or five minutes in prayer is too much.

Another says: "I have so much business to attend to that I have no time to say my morning prayers." But we expect that God will make us prosperous in the undertakings of the day if we don't give it first and earliest portion to Him! Those who excuse themselves for neglecting their morning prayers on account of business must remember that it is bad to be always in too great a hurry. There are some persons who are always in an impetuous haste, and somehow they do not succeed. "He that laboreth and is in haste is so much the more in want," (Eccl. xii. 11). You are no busier than David, who had to govern a large kingdom, prosecute many wars, and yet he watched for the morning dawn to pour forth his soul in prayer. And so it was with many of the saints, who had more business to attend to than we, and yet they found time to say their morning prayers and make long meditations.

But let us be candid with ourselves. Is not our sloth and indifference in the service of God and the sanctification of our souls the real cause of the neglect of our morning prayers? If the Holy King David watched at the break of day to pray to the Lord, it was because his soul thirsted for its God. "O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day. For Thee my soul hath thirsted." We want both the zeal and love of God, and therefore we neglect prayer, and particularly our morning prayers. This is the real cause of the neglect.

Let us, then, when morning comes, cast away all sloth, all over-indulgence in sleep, all domestic duties, all business, all temporal cares that may hinder us from praying to and praising God. Let us say to ourselves each morning: This may be my last day on earth, I will rise and give its first minutes to God who made me, so that when my days shall come to an end and the night of the grave is near, my soul may see with joy the dawn of eternal day.—The Societal.

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