

N. Y. Catholic Review. SHORT SERMONS FOR BUSY PEOPLE.

Preached in St. Patrick's Cathedral, N. Y.
PRAYER.

The prayer of the Pharisee and of the Publican—St. Luke, xviii 9-14—For the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

Lent is a time when we ought to give special consideration to prayer, since the exercises of repentance and self denial to which we are called by the voice of God in this season, to be profitable, must be directed by prayer. It does not diminish the importance of prayer as a subject of Christian thought, that everyone who makes an avowal of religious obligation is familiar, in some degree, with it. Prayer is the soul of religion, and human life without religion is essentially a failure. Prayer, then, for, is a thing of permanent and paramount interest. It behooves us therefore to make up our minds as to the place of prayer in Christian life, and to see if we cannot ascertain the causes of our want of success in it.

To begin with, our reason has a good deal to say to us concerning the claims of prayer. And in this way:

Prayer is a raising up of the mind and heart to God to worship His supreme uncreated excellence, to return Him sincere thanks as the Author and Giver of all the good things we have, and to make a petition to Him for all the help necessary for our future welfare of both body and soul.

If there were nothing but our native reason to teach us that this exercise is a necessary duty no other instructor would be needed.

The first utterance of reason as well as of revelation is that God made the heavens and the earth and all things in them. Man therefore is not the author of his own existence. Never mind that class of men who have invaded ineffective sections of the brute creation in the vain hope of finding their ancestors: there is not a sort of justice in the world would accept the evidence on which these self-degrading people rest their claim to be descended from the gorilla. People who have difficulty in locating their progenitors will be more successful as well as more rational if they keep nearer home in the search for them.

There is only one architect worthy of such a noble work as man, that architect is the self-existing, all perfect God.

And just as man could not have come into existence of himself, so neither could he for one instant continue to exist himself. Truly does Holy Writ declare: "How can anything endure if Thou wouldst not? or be preserved if not called by Thee?" But if Thou turn away Thy face they shall be troubled; Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fall and shall return to their dust." (Ps. ciii, 29). God, who preserves life in us, must also concur in our operations. In a word, such a thing as independence does not find a place in created life. God alone is independent.

Now what can be more comfortable to that reason which demonstrates to us our absolute dependence upon God than that we should humbly bow to the mighty being who built up and sustains our very life. Not alone is it comfortable to reason that we should do so but reason demands it as a duty which cannot without injustice be ignored.

There is the first item of prayer, viz: adoring the supreme excellence of the Creator and accounted for the existence of the creature.

There is another truth which native intelligence proclaims to us—that God is the author and giver of all the goods we enjoy.

We have often had repeated to us the words of the Apostle: "What have you that you have not received, and having received it why do you glory as if it were your own?" but we do not appear to have fully brought home their meaning or we should not be so vain about the things we possess and the things we have done.

The poorest enjoy blessings and gifts which deserve to be highly prized—life, time, intelligence, moral freedom, the power to choose our own lot, to decide our own eternal destinies. With these man is rich. These are the things that constitute man's glory, not silk and broad cloth, and iron guarded mansions; and these blessings are the portion of every man.

Who was it that gave us these gifts? From the plenty of God's house they have come to us. And our nature, intelligence and sense of justice call on us to thank God for them. Therefore the second item of prayer—thanksgiving for His favors—is a duty imposed by natural instinct.

And for the future. Who will be bold enough to make his calculations without reckoning with God's will?

If the first principle of religion has taken practical hold on our mind we must feel deeply that our lot is not shaped by God's will that our projects, not approved by Him, count for very little indeed. Truly does God say: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it."

But dependence on God deepens and becomes, if possible, more absolute when we come to deal with the supernatural mission given to each human being to be accomplished successfully at his peril.

The attainment of heaven is beyond our natural capabilities, and demands a special assistance from a source outside and superior to ourselves. This special assistance we call grace. And grace is a free gift of God, given according to His own good pleasure. But without it we cannot think a thought conducive to our salvation. To dispose ourselves for receiving this help from God we must acknowledge the need of it, and we must ask it.

Therefore this third item in the exercise of prayer, viz, making petition to God for the necessities for soul and body, is demanded by our reason.

Let us add to those reasons a few of the positive enactments of the New Testament.

Our Lord says: "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." "We ought always to pray and not to faint."

Be instant in prayer watching in it the temptation. Praying withal for us also that God may open unto us a door of speech to speak the mystery of Christ.

These are just specimens of what can be found in every page of the Holy Scriptures.

Now, since prayer is a dictate of reason

and a positive divine command, and since God has made such liberal promises to the practice of prayer, how is it that we find it at times so hard to pray, and that when we do pray our prayers go apparently unheard?

Ascertain the causes of the Pharisee's failure when he went into the Temple to pray and you shall be pretty sure to find the reason for your own want of success. The Pharisee professed faith in God, and made avowal of certain services on which God had a claim. But to his mind, to be religious was to lead a peaceable life, to be kind and courteous to others, to take a just share in supporting the public burdens. Having discharged his duty by society, he felt that there was little more for him to trouble himself about. And so he came into God's house ostensibly to pray, but in reality to pay a compliment to his good works. He recounts his good works, pronounces his own praises, and thanks God that he is not like the rest of God's creatures. But in spite of all this excellence and self-praise, God assures us that this Pharisee and his prayers were rejected.

Our Lord, in putting before us this type, is not speaking of any person in particular. He just gives a specimen of the worldly minded man who makes a pretence of religion. Of such men the world has been full from Our Lord's day to now. And it is because we have allowed the spirit of self-esteem, of worldliness and of superficial spirituality to dominate us that our prayers are not fruitful.

If we were conscious, like the contrite publican, of sinfulness, that all our good qualities are God's, that without God's grace we can do nothing, then our prayers, grounded on humility, would place the clouds and move God to mercy and bounty.

PURITY OF CHRISTIAN MORALS.

Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

We should fail to reach the source of the prevalent feculence of faith and to indicate a remedy, if we did not go to the heart. Out of the heart go forth not only the evil thoughts and desires that defile the conscience, but also the clouds that darken the mind. It imparts to the mind its own likeness and dislikes. It occupies the mind with low and grovelling pursuits. It fills the mind with thoughts of frivolous and sensual objects. It draws down the attention, fixes and absorbs it in the satisfaction of its desires, thus blinding the mind to all considerations that require exertion, purity and elevation above the things of sense. The loss of faith is the result as well as the punishment of sensual indulgence. The Apostle of the Gentiles, describing the nations of pagan antiquity in the height of their civilization, says that "knowing God" with the light of natural reason "they did not glorify Him or give Him thanks, but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened."

A similar darkening process is going on amongst modern nations that were once remarkable for the fervor and brightness of their faith. The world is lapsing back into a paganism not the less degrading and terrible in its consequences because the more refined. Paganism is but the defilement of self and the passions of the heart—what St. Augustine called the love of self unto the contempt of God.

The ancients worshipped all the corrupt passions of the heart in idols of their imagination and handwork; modern paganism, more subtle and refined, dispenses with the block of wood and stone, and worships self without intermediary in Nature. Naturalism is the religion of the day. Nature, and more particularly human nature, is the idol—not human nature elevated and purified by grace, but nature as an ideal nature purified by imagination and sentiment from all that is gross and vile, but a realistic nature in which every passion wears a crown, every instinct has its right of play, every emotion its expression and liberty of action. This is the only god recognized by the philosophy and the science of the age in its pet theory of evolution; this is the god which gives inspiration to the literature and the art, and is exhibited on the stage of the French School, from which the world takes its fashions. Its object is to portray and idealize in realistic colors what the modern French man with cynical frankness calls "the human beast."

This religion of naturalism has also its church and hierarchy and organization in the Lodge. Free Masonry, lapsing itself to the ideas and prejudices of nations, is presented to the eyes of England and English speaking countries as an institution of benevolence and fraternalization; but in the Catholic countries of Europe and South America, where it has succeeded in enslaving the masses, it shows itself in true colors, in literature and art, in the press, on the stage, in legislation, all animated with one purpose, rallying to a single cry, carrying out vigorously a simple plan: Destroy the Church of Jesus Christ by corrupting the hearts of her children. First dispose the heart of youth for corruption by imparting to it a mere pagan education without faith or religion, and then subject it to all the influence of an impure press.

It were, however, an illusion to suppose that this naturalism is confined to a few nations. The world's atmosphere is infected with it. It is taught from Sunday pulpits, in books of science, dealt out from railway stalls, placed on the street walls and public thoroughfares. It is exhibited in shop windows and in theatrical representations. A philosophical secular press reeks with it. Whilst it devotes one column to the detailed narration and vivid description of crimes which the inspired Apostle tells us should not be so much as mentioned among Christians, it will deplore in another the growth of lawlessness, and condemn the negligence of officials in repressing it, ignoring the fact that the very crimes it stigmatizes could not infrequently be traced to its own disclosures and descriptions.

The punishment, too, of modern paganism is similar to that of the ancient. "Thinking themselves wise, they became fools." Therefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, and they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator." This perversion and blinding of the mind, proceeding from the corruption of the heart, is the most dreadful of God's punishments. It is the beginning on earth of that eternal reprobation consisting in hell

endured not once or twice but a thousand times over in the intensity of its pains and torture.

If we seek a remedy we shall find it to be the same as that applied to ancient paganism—Jesus Christ yesterday, to day and the same forever. He came upon earth to lift man from the degradation of paganism in all its forms. He began by the heart, setting before it the example of the highest sanctity. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us that we might see in human form and habit the splendor of infinite holiness. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus." He is still with us in His Holy Church, from which He desires to shine in the hearts of all by the teaching of His heavenly doctrine, by the infusion of His grace through the sacraments, by the devotion which has for its object to draw the hearts of all men close to His Sacred Heart, that they may be enlightened and warmed with His love. It is especially in the worthy reception of the Holy Eucharist that Christ shines in the heart, and the heart is drawn close to the Heart of Jesus. It is the aim of the Holy League to draw hearts to the Heart of Jesus through prayer and the frequentation of the sacraments. If it will succeed this year, consecrated to the Heart of Youth, in drawing the youth of all lands to the more frequent use of the sacraments, how powerfully will it not contribute to the future sanctity of Christian morals!

O Jesus, through the most pure Heart of Mary I offer Thee the prayers, work and sufferings of this day for all the intentions of Thy Divine Heart.

If for them in particular to save Thy children from the corruption of the world, ever growing more covetous, wilful and impure. Heart of Jesus, may we fly from all that is against Thy love. Amen.

TO THE SACRED HEART.

On Sacred Heart!

Witness compassionate of every woe

Which mortal e'er hath known, or e'er shall know

Heart which hath borne all care,

Carried all sorrow that on man can press:

Oh! in thy loving frame and tortur'd spirit

Against inhuman outrage vainly pleading!

Each secret dark, each innermost recess,

All to thy sight laid bare.

What shall thy name express?

Oh Sacred Heart!

Thy love for man hath to the altar bound

Thine, the very sins that wound Thee—

For thine own wrongs to die!

That thou of suffering's chain might'st miss

No link,

From the dread vision of Thy Moral Pain

Outcast before Thee, thou didst not

With these intensest agony to shrink!

In this bleeding heart, not

Of Thy dread chastised drink

Oh Sacred Heart!

Stated with anguish, moan'd, rev'd, despair'd!

But of all scorn by man or hands devis'd!

What save Thy Heart, save Thy Holy Will,

Restrained or yet restrained angelic will,

As each vile worm, unawed by fear or shame

Professes Thy Truth, Thy Venerable Name,

Thou who poling with his agonizing words!

My cap to them I'll

As they have filled my Lord's!

—E. G.

A LANTEN THOUGHT.

"To show a heart's grief-riant;

To starve his sin,

Not his

And that's to keep thy Lent."

ays Quaint old Herrick. It is surely a

desirable thing to starve one's sin; and

none the less to keep an eye upon the sin,

lest it overflow with luxuries innocent

enough at other times, but out of place at

this season.

But there are those who, for one reason

or another—all health may be, or hard

labor—can not fast. What can they do?

They can pray; and can, except

when the most grinding toil prevents, visit

the poor. A daily visit to the poor, with

such aims left behind as may be needed, is

a great help in the struggle after the

higher life. So do not neglect the alms

There are these, unhappily, to whom a

life of bread means life, and the lack of it

death.

And, then, there are destitute people

whom we forget or ignore: the poor who

have set themselves apart from human

kind by unlovely traits of character; the

poor (with much money) who, for their

own faults, are foreseen; the afflicted who

sick sympathy though not alms; or the

old, whom the young pass by in the search

for pleasure. To visit these persons is to

visit the poor—the poorest poor on all

God's beautiful earth.

Each one who reads this can without

doct call to mind some deaf old person,

to whom a half hour's chat would be a

long long remembered; some one with

failing sight, who could live for months

upon the memory of a poem or a sermon

read aloud; some one so utterly aban-

doned that the briefest call would be an

unaccustomed pleasure. Here is Lenten

work, and with it will come its own

reward. The duty will be trans-

formed to a pleasure, and the habit

acquired, bringing a new source of

delight into lives which are comparatively

useless because the good fate would do

does not seem close enough at hand. It

is at hand if we would see it. Often it

is the rich who are in God's sight the

poor; often it is the highest charity to

have patience with "small and sordid

souls." It is easy to give alms; it is hard,

at first, to give help of another kind. Let

us while doing one not forget to do the

other.

"I shall pass through this world but

once. Any good thing, therefore, that I

can do, or any kindness that I can show

to any human being, let me do it now.

Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I

shall not pass this way again." Some

other way, some more glorious way, God

grant; but not this way, in this same re-

lation to our fellow creatures. This Lent

will never come again, and much of it

has already passed.—*Am. Maria.*

And is it not a real penance for us to

stop and think before we speak or act?

It is, indeed, as each one of us can say

for those who have been up to the

desires of their heart, and they changed

the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped

and served the creature rather than the

Creator." This perversion and blinding of

the mind, proceeding from the corruption

of the heart, is the most dreadful of God's

punishments. It is the beginning on earth

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hell

the pruned knife or stake? And which plant bears the prettier blossoms—that which has been improved through the gardener's care, or that which has wildly sprung up here and there by the roadside? Those who know full well whereof they speak tell us the tree or plant that has not known the pruning knife is a thing at once unsightly and unfruitful.

Just as must it be with us, dear children! In the time of our growing, when our little characters are being formed, we must daily train ourselves to discipline and self denial, else we grow up to become a being unsightly and wanting in the fruits of virtue.

Let us then to the work! Prune and straighten and strengthen whenever and wherever we find the need, ever remembering that we are growing plants in the sunshine of God's love.—*A Priest of the Mission.*

ST. ANTHONY WORKS HIS CONVERSION.

A Protestant gentleman was once travelling through Italy. Like the majority of his co-religionists, he ridiculed the veneration shown to St. Anthony of Padua, and laughed at its miracles. A visit to the sanctuaries of Rome and the principal places of interest in the Peninsula only served to increase his contempt and derision. During his stay in Padua, he visited the church dedicated to St. Anthony. The walls inside are covered with votive offerings, and afford a striking testimony of the piety and gratitude of the people. The stranger looked on these votive offerings, read their inscriptions with eager curiosity.

Suddenly he felt his heart moved, and an interior voice called out to him: "Renounce your errors and become a Catholic." But he resisted the grace given him, and set out to Milan, with the intention of diverting his mind from the unwelcome thought. All in vain; for the interior voice sounded in his heart and rang in his ears day and night. The impression it made on his mind could not be effaced. Impelled by grace, he returned to Padua, publicly abjured his errors in the church dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua, and solemnly embraced the Catholic faith.

He subsequently published a book in Venice, wherein he relates the history of his conversion, and gave a brief exposition of the principal proofs of the truth of the Catholic Church. He thanked God for the remainder of his life for the great grace vouchsafed him through the blessed St. Anthony of Padua.

POWER AND STRENGTH OF CHARITY.

Once there was a little piece of iron, which looked very frail, but was really very strong. One after another had tried to break it, and failed.

"I'll master it," said the ax; and his blows fell heavily on the iron.

But every blow made his edge more blunt, until he ceased to strike.

"Leave it to me," said the saw, and with his relentless teeth worked backward and forward on its surface until they were all worn down; and broken, he fell aside.

"Ha, ha!" said the hammer, "I knew you wouldn't succeed. I'll show you the way."

But at the first fierce blow off flew his head, and the iron remained as before.

"Shall I try?" asked the soft, small flame.

They all depleted the flame; but he curled gently around the iron, embraced it, and never left it until it melted under its irresistible influence.

There are hearts hard enough to resist the force of wrath, the malice of persecution and the fury of pride, so as to make their acts recoil on their adversaries; but there is a power stronger than any of these: hard indeed is the heart that can resist love.—*Am. Maria.*

PRACTICE HEROIC VIRTUES.

It seems to me that some writers are disposed to lay undue stress on the amiable and tender qualities of Mary and of holy Christian women without dwelling sufficiently on the strong and robust points of their character. The Holy Scripture in one place pronounces a lengthened eulogy on woman. What does the Holy Ghost especially admire in her? Not her sweet and amiable temper or her gentle disposition, though of course she possessed those qualities, for no woman is perfect without them. No; he admires her valor, courage, fortitude, and the sturdy virtues of self-reliance. He does not say: "Who shall find a gentle woman?" but rather: "Who shall find a valiant woman?" As things brought from afar and from the uttermost east is the price of her. It is only heroic virtues practiced in an heroic degree, that the Church canonizes.—*Cardinal Gibbons.*

SPARING THE ROD.

The parent who flies to the rod to correct every trifling fault or misdemeanor, says the *Ladies Home Journal* will have no influence with her children when they are too old to be governed by force. A child should never be struck in anger. A box on the ear may rupture the membrane that forms the drum, and cause permanent deafness. A heavy blow may do mischief that years of repentance cannot undo. Punishment is for discipline, not for revenge. It is to teach the child to avoid evil and do right. It never should be a vent for the angry passions of the mother. Love, patience and firmness, and the instruments she must use to mold her child's character. Punishment is a means to an end; let her pray for grace to use it wisely.

If you decide, from what you have heard or read, that you will take Hood's Sarsaparilla, do not be induced to buy any substitute instead.

Mrs. Harry Pearson, Hawtrey, writes: For about three months I was troubled with fainting spells and a dizziness which was growing worse, and would attack me three or four times a day. At last my husband purchased a bottle of Northrup & Lyman's Vegetable Discovery, from which I derived considerable benefit. I then procured another, and before I was aware my affliction was completely gone, and I have not had an attack of it since."

Minard's Lintment for sale every where.



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HOME WITHOUT A MOTHER.

The room is in disorder,
The flower-stand upset, and the mischief to pay;
And Johnny is screaming
As loud as he's able
For nothing goes right when mamma's away.

What a scene of discomfort and confusion home would be if mamma did not return. If your wife is slowly breaking down, from a combination of domestic cares and female disorders,