

FIVE MINUTE SERMON REV. F. P. HICKY, O. S. B. NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

INDIFFERENCE "But they neglected..." (Matt. xxii. 5.)

These few words, my dear brethren, in the Gospel, "but they neglected," touch our consciences in a tender, perhaps a sore part. The souls of every one of us are soiled with negligence. Many might object to own that they lived in sin, but they would be bound to admit negligence, indifference. Please note that in the gospel, all those who neglected had excuses; but their excuses availed them nothing.

In reality, neglect is a dangerous evil—not, perhaps, so much from what it is as to what it leads. A cold on the chest may mean nothing; neglected, it may mean pneumonia and a premature death.

When we grow careless, whether it is about our prayers, cutting them down or saying them distractedly; or about our Holy Communions, no regularity, no earnestness; or about good example and care of our children, or in drifting into bad company; or in compromising, being afraid to make a bold stand for our religion—do not let us think these trifles.

For in reality what are we neglecting? The call of the Great King, our Father, Master, Redeemer. He expects this life to be a preparation—earnest preparation—for the union with His Son in the eternal kingdom. He bids us to come, to make ready to come, to have the wedding garment of grace prepared. And most of us neglect! We hear talk of the strenuous life; where is our earnestness and endeavor to prepare for and hasten to the kingdom of heaven?

And for what are we neglecting to make sure of heaven? For pleasure? And is living in neglect and in sin such a pleasure? A bad conscience is a cheerful companion! And the shame and remorse make our laughter hollow and our joys a mockery.

For profit? All we get by neglecting God does us as much good as the thirty pieces of silver, for which he sold our Lord, did Judas! How few can command riches in this world! It is one here and there, makes a fortune; and one in a million, who is content with what he has. And the struggle for wealth and bargaining care have broken down his health, and it is a dying man, who looks around and asks for how long can he enjoy his money. He may not remember much of the Gospel, but one phrase will haunt his memory: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." (Luke xii. 20.) But for most of us, when we neglect, it is for sensuality, or sloth, or some little dishonest gain, or to give vent to our temper, or indulge in evil desires—these are our idols, and we prefer them to God! To whom have you likened Me and made Me equal, and compared Me and made Me like?" says the Almighty by His prophet. (Isaiah xlvii. 5.)

Though most of us begin to neglect only in little things, let us not deceive ourselves; we shall not stop at that. Why should we fall further? Because God's grace is withdrawn. The graces we have neglected are offered to others. In the Gospel, when the first made excuse, were they not passed by and others invited?

We shall not stop at little things, because we get used to sin, and think less of it. One moment's glance into our past lives shows us that. What would have terrified us some years back are now the daily occurrences of a careless life. As, in the Scripture says: "He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart." (John xii. 40.)

These are the effects of indifference and neglect. We fall, and we fall into what? Mortal sin. We are weakened by the withdrawal of grace; too irascible to make an effort, we fall into mortal sin. That, neglected, soon becomes a habit of sin. That, too, is neglected. We will put things right some time, next Easter, next mission; but these opportunities are neglected too. And the end comes, far sooner than we thought, and we have not time, nor we will, nor the grace; and we fall under the judgment of God. For we have neglected.

Do not draw back and say: "I am carrying things too far." No, indeed. For look: is there a Catholic, who is now lost for ever, who intended to be lost? Are there not many among the condemned, who once were better than we are this day? They were baptized and instructed, and made their First Communion, and went regularly for years, perhaps; and then what was it? A bad book or a bad companion; or only laziness, or disliking the priest, or hating to leave home for work? Whatever it was, it was only a little change at first; but they neglected. But they never meant or intended to fall as they did.

If our angel guardians had this day to give an account of us to our Divine Master, would they have to say in the words of the Gospel: "Behold, we have invited them, called them, but they neglected?" If our poor angel would be compelled to say this, let us examine what would have been the cause of our ruin. Each of us has something which, if not restrained and kept in hand, would lead us into sin. Contrast this something—the burden of

our confessions, whatever it may be—contrast this something with what we are neglecting for its sake! A peaceful life here and the kingdom of heaven hereafter. And contrast it with Whom we are neglecting for its sake and at its bidding? Our heavenly Father, Who has loved us so much; our Blessed Redeemer, Who died for us, and left us Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, Whose Sacred Heart now is yearning to make friends with us, and fill us with the fire of His Divine Love! My brethren, after all, shall it be said to us: "But they neglected?"

TEMPERANCE

IS BEER INJURIOUS?

There has been circulated much literature on the beneficial effects of beer. It has been lauded as a substitute for bread, a nerve builder, a blood maker, a physical architect. And its attractive feature, according to the same literature, is that it is not an intoxicant, produces no intoxicating effects. We have met men who had pledged themselves against all forms of intoxicating drink; yet they freely imbibed beer. They were astonished at the ignorance of those who maintained that beer is intoxicating and harmful. Yet when they claim that they have never felt any evil effects, although they had indulged plentifully, they are imposing on the fair name of the truth.

Beer contains a certain per cent. of alcohol; and alcohol is injurious to the system, because it is recognized as a poison; and alcohol is intoxicating. There is no doubt that beer contains alcohol, and hence is injurious. Dr. S. H. Burgen has drawn the following conclusions, after a careful study and observation of thirty-five years: "I think beer kills quicker than any other liquor. My attention was first called to its insidious effects when I began examining for life insurance. I passed an unusually good risk five Germans—young business men—who seemed in the best of health, and with superb constitutions. In a few years I was amazed to see the whole five die, one after another, with what ought to have been mild and easily curable diseases. On comparing my experience with that of other physicians I found they were all having similar luck with confirmed beer drinkers, and my practice since has heaped confirmation on confirmation.

The first organ to be attacked is the kidneys; the liver soon sympathizes, and then comes, most frequently, dropsy or Bright's disease, both certain to end fatally. Any physician who cares to take the time will tell you that among the dreadful results of beer drinking are lockjaw and erysipelas, and that the beer drinker is incapable of recovering from mild disorders and injuries not usually regarded as a grave character. "The beer drinker is much worse off than the whiskey drinker, who seems to have more elasticity and reserve power. The whiskey drinker will even have delirium tremens; but after the fit is gone you will sometimes find good material to work upon. Good management may bring him around. But when a beer drinker gets into trouble, it seems almost as if you have to recreate the man before you can do anything for him. I have talked this for years, and have had abundance of living and dead instances around me to support my opinion.

Dr. S. S. Lungren, a leading homeopathic physician and surgeon, says, after twenty-five years' practice: "It is difficult to find any part in the confirmed beer drinker's machinery that is doing its work as it should. This is why their life chords snap off like glass rods when disease or accident gives them a little blow. Beer drinking shortens life. This is no mere opinion; it is a well-settled recognized fact. Physicians and insurance companies accept this as unquestionably as any other undisputed fact of science. The great English physicians decide that the heart's action is increased 13 per cent. in its efforts to throw off alcohol introduced into the circulation. The result is easily figured out. The natural pulse beat is 76 per minute. If we multiply this by 60 an hour, and 24 hours in a day, and add 13 per cent. we find that the heart has been compelled to do an extra hour's work during that time in throwing off the burden of a few drinks equal to 155 tons, lifted one foot high."

The President of the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company has for years been investigating the relation of beer drinking to longevity, and he declared, as the result of a series of observations carried on among a selected group of persons who were habitual drinkers of beer, that although for two or three years there was nothing remarkable, yet presently death began to strike, and then the mortality became astounding and uniform in its manifestations. There was no mistaking it. The history was almost invariably Robust, apparent health, full muscles, a fair outside, increasing weight, florid faces; then a touch of cold or a sniff of malaria, and instantly some acute disease, with almost invariably typhoid symptoms, was in violent action, and ten days or less ended it. It was as if the system had been kept fair on the outside, while within it was eaten to a shell, and at the first touch of disease there was utter collapse, every fiber was poisoned and weak. And this in its main features, varying in degree, has been his observation in beer drinking everywhere. It is peculiarly deceptive at first; it is thoroughly

destructive at the last. It were well then that our beer drinking friends who see no harm in their beverage, be warned in time to the awful devastations of this form of intoxication. They who give the warning have long experience and careful observation behind them, and it is hardly possible that they are mistaken in their conclusions.—Rev. T. G. Beane.

THE MIRACULOUS BLOOD

BRUGES POSSESSES TREASURE DEAR TO THE BELGIAN HEART

Bruges, the city of bridges, the city of bells, possesses a treasure dear to the hearts of the Belgians, a treasure round which centres no small part of the religious life of the nation. It is the relic of the Miraculous Blood. It is often asked what is this Miraculous Blood, what homage should be paid to it, whence has it come?

The Miraculous Blood is not the Precious Blood of our Divine Saviour to which our supreme worship is due. Neither is it like the Unassumed Blood which though separated from the Sacred Humanity during the triduo of the Passion, as it lay in dark stains along the Way of Sorrows, was yet united to the Godhead of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity and was therefore worthy of the deepest adoration. Was it for the consolation of His Blessed Mother who was to remain on earth for yet fourteen years or was it for the enriching of His Church, that at the moment of the Resurrection Our Lord suffered some of the Precious Blood to remain unassumed? Such was the Blood upon the veil of Veronica, on the Holy Winding Sheet, on the Cross, on the Scala Sancta, and on the Thorns and Nails; but this Blood which was not assumed lost immediately its union with the Divinity, ceased to be what is strictly called the Precious Blood, forfeited its rights to absolute worship or latria, and became henceforth only an intensely holy relic to be venerated with a very high worship, but not to be worshipped as Divine, and it should be called hereafter Miraculous Blood. Some of this Miraculous Blood was treasured in the Holy City by faithful Christians throughout the long centuries when the Roman eagle and later the crescent of Islam dominated the ancient and almost ruined city of Jerusalem.

The eleventh century saw the rise of the great crusading movement whose purpose was to restore to Christendom the places hallowed by the Life of the God-man during His three and thirty years upon earth. To the clarion call "God wills it!" the faith and chivalry of medieval Europe made answer in eight great Crusades, and King and Prince and Knight and Peasant pledged themselves by vow to draw the sword in defence of the Holy Sepulchre. In the first crusade Jerusalem was taken and the brave knight, Godfrey de Bouillon, was chosen the first Christian King of the City of David, but refusing to wear a crown of gold in the city where his God had worn a Crown of Thorns, was content to style himself Defender of the Holy Sepulchre.

When the encroachments of Islam again threatened the Holy City a second crusade, preached by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, was organized and was headed by King Louis VII. of France. Among the princes who took the Cross of the Crusaders was Thierry of Alsace and with him went his brave wife. During the days of failure and disappointment that followed, the banner of Thierry of Alsace was borne ever in the front rank. When the defeated armies of France returned to Europe, he pressed on to the Holy City, where he rendered glorious service to the Christian kingdom of Jerusalem, ruled then by the successor of Godfrey, his brother, Baldwin the First.

There the wife of Thierry of Alsace, the gentle and valiant Countess, spent her days in loving service, tenderly caring for the sick, the wounded and the dying. When it became necessary for Thierry of Alsace to return to Europe the people of Jerusalem would not suffer her who had gone "about doing good" to depart from their midst. They offered to the great Count the priceless relic of the Holy Blood, if in exchange for it, he would leave them his noble wife. The strange commerce was effected, and the Countess of Alsace, rejoicing as she said, to have been twice bought by the Blood of Christ, remained in the city where that Blood had been shed and sought henceforth to fashion her life after the Divine Model of Him, Who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Nobly she wore her Red Cross, unflinchingly she trod the self-sacrificing path of charity, for the Cross on her arm was but the outward symbol of the love of the Crucified within her own soul. And in our days of sorrow and strife too "may the outward show be least themselves," so, too, may the devoted and heroic women who go forth into the thick of the fight, hear beyond the cry of a common humanity the call of Him Who has said: "So long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me." Thus may their work be raised from out the lower level of mere philanthropy to the fair heights of the supernatural when the sick and wounded are tended not only because of their need but because of the "traces of God" that are

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found in them. And when the weight of weariness is felt—and who shall say how often and how long that may be?—let the women who wear the Red Cross today remember the Countess of Alsace and seek new courage whither she sought it, and find new strength where she found it, in the inexhaustible stream of love and of grace that flows from the Cross of Christ.

To Bruges, the land of the Belgians, Thierry of Alsace brought his priceless treasure, which was itself encased in a rich reliquary of silver gilt. From the day, April 7th, 1150, when the valiant Crusader returned to his capital with the precious relic it has played an important part in the religious life of the people of Flanders.

In the month of May, 1302, the citizens of Bruges, under the leadership of their two brave patriots Breidel and De Coninck, victoriously drove the French from their city. To commemorate this deliverance, the solemn procession of the Holy Blood was instituted in 1303, and a promise was made that the procession should take place every year on the Monday following the first Sunday of May and it has become one of the great national and religious celebrations of Flanders. To assist at it thousands of Belgians come from all parts of the country. The quiet city is crowded. On the day appointed the Blessed Relic is carried in triumphant procession surrounded by multitudes in reverent prayer. From the belfry or Grand Tower the famous bells of the city ring out, those chimes of which Longfellow wrote:

"Low and loud and sweetly blended, Low at times and loud at times, And changing like a poet's rhyme."

These chimes are silent today, for the iron band of war encircles the land of the Belgians, the land of the Miraculous Blood. At the outbreak of the great war the people of Bruges sent to a place of safety the beautiful relic, feeling that its presence in their midst was their surest pledge of blessing and victory. May it be so to them!

But this Miraculous Blood is in one place only. There is a Divine Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ offered daily, "from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof in all parts of the earth. May the Precious Blood, red in the chalice of each morning's Mass and worthy of our supremest worship cry to heaven for pardon for the world and obtain peace for the warring nations of the earth and the return of all men to Christ, our King.—Providence Visitor.

A MOTHER'S LOVE

The most beautiful thing in life is a mother's love. It begins with stitches on a tiny garment and it outlasts the grave. Some mothers may be unkind, but rarely. These are the exceptions. The love that the mother bears for her son follows him through babyhood, school days, young manhood and fatherhood, through all his successes and defeats. In honor or disgrace, it utterly owns him. A stain can never attach itself to him; for always it is he who is wronged by the world. To his mother he can confidently turn on any occasion under any circumstances. In her he finds always the same tender parent who sought dawning light in his baby face, and the secret of his greatness has lain hidden in her heart as she pondered over its promise. The realization of her dream cannot fail, for she sees its fruition beyond the end of life itself. The mother of the condemned criminal with the halter about his neck knows he is pure, knows he is innocent, knows he has never in his life told her a lie. It is not blindness; it is revelation, prophetic of something not yet attained in racial development.

The mother has this power of vision. She can see in a shapeless bit of life the lives of an unending succession of men. She has also the strength of faith that is unshakable. It approaches the divine. If heaven may be found at all on earth it is in the heart of mother. There is no life a woman will not live, no death she will not die for her children. She makes a home what it is and, while maintaining unbroken relations with the home she loves, builds a family circle of her own. In all

the complex relationships of life she nobly bears her part. Man's life may be diverse and all absorbing and difficult, but it is as nothing to the experience of the mother who has borne and laid away and lived all that life has to offer.—Catholic Universe.

Let each one endeavor to do all that she can to correct the miseries and defects in her own disposition; and yet there will remain enough of human weakness, in the community in which we live, to make saints of us all. We need not fear that we shall not have the means of sanctifying ourselves; they are here in abundance; we give them to each other at almost every moment. Use them, these means to your spiritual advantage.

A man does not receive the statements that "two and two make four" and "that the pure in heart shall see God" on the same terms. The one can be proved to him with four grains of corn; he can never arrive at a belief in the other till he realizes it in the intimate persuasion of his whole being. James Russell Lowell.

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