

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

By Rev. M. Borsari

THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

SURVEY OF THE DYING YEAR

Today's Gospel ends with the words: "The child grew and waxed strong, full on wisdom, and the grace of God was in him." We also ought to grow in goodness and virtue, and wax strong in the faith by leading truly Christian lives, and we ought to do our best to preserve within us the grace of God, or to recover it, if we have lost it. Are we doing this? Now is the time when we ought to examine ourselves on this point, as the year is so nearly an end, and the new year is just beginning.

1. Let us look back at the past and ask ourselves whether we have been growing in goodness. Can we truthfully say that we have improved during this year? Have we always resisted evil and aimed at doing right? Have we been careful to avoid sin and all occasions of sin? And, above all things, have we practised the virtues that as Christians we are bound to practise? Would that we were able to answer all these questions in the affirmative! Unhappily we must acknowledge that all is not well with us, and some will perhaps make the sad discovery that they have become worse, and not better, during the past year. They will have to say:

"Again and again I have altogether abandoned the struggle against evil, or have carried it on in a half-hearted way, so that I have constantly fallen into sin. I have not triumphed over evil, but evil has triumphed over me." Many others will have to confess that they have troubled very little about doing right; they have taken no pains to practise the Christian virtues; they often had an opportunity to say a good word or do a good action, but through carelessness and indifference they wasted all their opportunities. They have been careful to provide for the body that perishes, but they have done little or nothing for their immortal souls. How can men be so foolish!

2. How have you practised your religion during the past year. Have you always faithfully obeyed the rules laid down for your guidance? What about the great Commandments that Jesus Christ our Lord made binding upon all Christians universally? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul," etc. Have you observed the Commandments of holy Church? Have you heard Mass with devotion every Sunday and on all the festivals of obligation? Have you been careful to keep Sundays and festivals holy? Have you received the Sacraments often? Have you abstained from flesh meat on the days when it is forbidden? Can you answer "Yes" to all these questions? Or must you to your shame confess that you have seldom obeyed the Commandments of God and of His holy Church, that you often might have gone to Mass, but stayed away through want of zeal and lively faith? Have you fulfilled the duties of your position in life? As a father or mother, have you always taken care of your children, and tried to lead them to do right and to avoid evil? And you children, how have you behaved towards your parents? Have you always remembered the Fourth Commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest live a long time, and it may be well with thee." How many will have to acknowledge their guilt and say, like the poor publican: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

3. Whoever commits grievous sins loses sanctifying grace and ceases to be a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of heaven. Being mindful of human frailty, God has given us the means whereby we may recover the grace that has been lost, and preserve it when we have recovered it. If, after baptism a Christian commits a mortal sin, he must have recourse to the holy Sacrament of Penance, in order to cleanse himself from sin and recover sanctifying grace. Have you done this whenever you have sinned grievously?

In order that we, poor, weak mortals, may not succumb to evil, but resist it, and so preserve sanctifying grace in our hearts, God has commanded us to pray: "Watch and pray, that ye fall not into temptation." Have you paid attention to these words of Holy Scripture? Have you been diligent in prayer? Have you prayed in the morning before beginning your day's work, and asked God for help, strength and protection during the day? Have you thanked Him at night for all that He has done for you? If we all prayed regularly morning and evening, we should be much better than we are, and much happier, because we should always be in the grace of God. But by our own fault, our own carelessness and indifference, we often fall into sin, and find it very hard to extricate ourselves from it. How sad will be the end of a man who habitually neglects prayer, if death overtakes him unawares, and he passes away, not being in the state of grace!

If we must now confess that we have in many ways failed in our duty to God, and that we have sinned by breaking the Commandments of God, and of the Church, we ought not to lose courage. No, let us bestir ourselves at the beginning of the new year, and resolve to lead better lives henceforth. Let us

avoid evil and do good; let us live as true Christians, in obedience to God and the Church, let us above all be anxious for the welfare of our immortal souls, living in and working with the grace of God, and then our Lord will bestow upon us in abundance happiness and blessings for the new year. Amen.

GOD BLESS EVERYONE

"God bless us every one," prayed Tiny Tim, Crippled and dwarfed of body, yet so tall Of soul, we tiptoe earth to look at him, High towering over all. He loved the loveless world, nor dreamed indeed, That it at best could give to him the while, But pitying glances, when his only need Was but a cheery smile!

And thus he prayed, "God bless us every one!" Enfolded all the creeds within the span Of his child-heart; and so, despising none, Was nearer saint than man.

I like to fancy God in Paradise, Lifting a finger o'er the rhythmic swing Of chiming harp and song, with eager eyes Turning earthward, listening—

The anthem stilled—the angels leaning there Above the golden walls—the morning sun Of Christmas bursting down like with prayer, "God bless us every one!"

—JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

BISHOPS' PROGRAM

HAS WORKERS' BACKING

SUPPORT OF CATHOLIC CHURCH VALUED BY LABOR MEN IN SOCIAL BETTERMENT

John Fitzpatrick, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor and chairman of the National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel workers, has responded for organized labor to the reconstruction program recently issued from the National Catholic War Council, welcoming cooperation in the task of reconstruction to which labor has accepted itself. In a statement outlining the attitude of the laboring man toward this program of social reconstruction Mr. Fitzpatrick says:

"Nothing has appeared in a long time that will be of more substantial benefit to the cause of organized labor and of economic justice than the social reconstruction program of the National Catholic War Council. The four Bishops who have signed this program and issued it to the world are entitled to the kindest thanks of every wage earner who has the interests of his fellows at heart, and both they and the Church will receive the thanks and appreciation in full measure. In the same measure they should receive the thanks of every good Catholic, for in hastening labor they have also given splendid proof that the Church is equal to the demands of the times and in applying its ancient and unchanging principles to modern conditions in a way that man is for the progress and general well-being of the race.

"The program of the National Catholic War Council is virtually the program of organized labor as expressed by the official declaration of the American Federation of Labor and the program of the Chicago Independent Labor Party. Its declarations in favor of maintaining the present wage rate and progressively raising it and at the same time taking steps to reduce the cost of living and to control large fortunes, constitute the strongest possible support for the position taken by organized labor. It should be printed in its entirety in every labor journal in the country. Nothing will do more to strengthen the cause of orderly but fundamental economic reform as opposed to the plans of those who would destroy our entire civilization at one blow in the hope of bettering the conditions of the masses. It is an adequate program provided it can be carried through as a program action. It is not a vision; it is a picture of the future. It is what labor demands now, and those who wish to avoid the excesses and dangers of a violent and bitter upheaval can do nothing better than to acknowledge its true conservatism and aid organized labor in putting it into practice. I must agree with its authors that conditions in America are far less disturbed than in European countries, yet I believe it would be a serious mistake not to realize that the workers and producers of America are in a mood for action.

"In nearly every respect the program of the National Catholic War Council is so comprehensive and so adequate to the needs of the times that I am confident its wide publication and its adoption by a political party pledged to carry it out would satisfy the needs of a large number who are on the point of breaking from their old moorings and joining with such hitherto inconsiderable groups as the Socialists. It is the sign which has been greatly needed that we can achieve the reforms on which our hearts are set without

breaking all the traditions of the past, good as well as bad.

"This program should be evidence to many who have oppressed labor's aims without understanding them that labor speaks today in the interests of all society, in the interests of true conservatism. It is not men who have changed. We are not departing from the ancient principles of justice and right. We are merely applying those principles to new conditions that have arisen very rapidly—so rapidly that many have failed to realize them. It is sufficient for those who doubt the need to ponder the statement here set forth with unquestionable authority that a considerable majority of the wage earners of the United States, both men and women, were not receiving living wages when prices began to soar in 1915, and that since 1915 the average rate of pay has not increased faster than the cost of living. Labor knows these bitter truths and labor has reached the point where it is determined to change these rotten conditions, conditions which mean the destruction of Christian society if they continue. In performing the task of reconstruction to which it has accepted labor welcomes and values most highly the cooperation and support of the Church, and the Church will gain along with labor as a result of the splendid pronouncement of the four representative Bishops who have signed this report."—The Guardian.

HOLY FATHER URGES UNITY

GIVES PORTUGUESE BISHOPRY PRINCIPLES TO INSURE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Lisbon, Oct. 17.—In the letter which the Pope sent to the Portuguese Bishops the Holy Father speaks of the apprehensions and expectations that all his heart in view of the religious and political outlook in Portugal.

The Pope speaks emphatically on the need for thorough unity among the Portuguese clergy, which, he says, will alone make possible the restoration of conditions favorable to Catholicism in the country.

The Pope exhorts the Bishops to send their young clerics to the Portuguese College in Rome, which was opened in 1880 through the liberality of a Portuguese nobleman, the Viscount of Penafiel. Under the Monarchy the college was not legally recognized by the Government, and consequently there was every hindrance to the study of the clergy in Portugal. Under present conditions the Bishops are able to use their discretion in matters of this kind.

The Pope also exhorts the Bishops to encourage the Catholic press, and to advise moderation and foresight. The Portuguese Catholics are by no means of one mind as to their form of government, and amid the conflicting opinions of Republicans and Monarchists the cause of religion is not likely to prosper. Since the tragic death of President Sidonio Pais it appears that the disputes among the Catholics have become more acrimonious to the great delight of the anti-clericals, who accuse the Catholics of conspiring against the Republic, and of being traitors to the fatherland.

The Holy Father stresses to be drawn into these conflicts as between political parties, but he commends to the Bishops the need for a great understanding between Church and State, and harmony between the civil and the ecclesiastical laws. He shows that the Church is not committed to any one form of Government, and views all forms indiscriminately, so long as they are not in opposition to the Divine law and the principles of the Catholic Church.

THE WORLD'S UNREST

Cardinal O'Connell recently gave an earnest and opportune address on the world's unrest, as caused in large part by crime for amusement and the riches which are supposed to make for happiness, and by envy on the part of many of those who are richer than themselves. He held no doctrine for a just and national desire for one's share of the good things of this world, and a certain diligence in seeking them, so long as these do not lead to our sense of proportion, our realization of what are the better things, God has made us of soul and body, and we have a right to the goods of both.

He continued: "All this I wish to say merely to emphasize the fact that I have striven in my own way, as far as my powers reached, to inculcate among the people of our church that it is their right and due as far as their ability goes, as far as the real contentment of life allows, as far as the true values of life permit, to gain and acquire and enjoy and use the good things of the world, the things that are really good of the world.

"God knows we do not want our people to be forever in a condition of semi-slavery. We want them to enjoy rights equally with those about them, and to attain to the positions in life which are due to their intelligence, to their integrity, to their labor and to their perseverance."

But His Eminence would also make it clear that the great bulk of humanity can be happy without luxuries; and it is no advantage to those who, in the nature of things, cannot attain riches, to have their minds poisoned by the breeders of class hatred. This is the work of the devil; and we see it in every

land. The world is going mad on the subject of riches and pleasure. It is teeming with bitter discontent. The Christian accepts material goods, in whatever righteous way they come to him, as blessings from God, and is grateful for them. The pagan principle is just to get them and to attach such an exaggerated importance to them as to be miserable without them.—True Voice.

THE SONG OF CHRISTMAS

Chant me a rhyme of Christmas—sing me a jolly song—And though it is filled with laughter, let it be pure and strong. Sing of the hearts hushed over with the story of the day—of the echo of childish voices that will not die away.

Of the blaze of the tinsel bough, and the timeless chimes and beat Of the drum that thrums to muster squadrons of scampering feet.

But, O, let your voices fall fainter, fall, blend with a softer tone. You cannot sing with the beauty of the gifts Christ hath shown.

And sing one verse for the voiceless; and yet one the song be done, A verse for the ones that have not, and a verse for the slightest and.

For though it be time for singing a merry Christmas glee, Let a low, sweet voice of pathos run through the melody.

—JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

FRENCH COLLEGE IN ROME SHOWS BIG ENROLLMENT

C. P. A. Catechism

Rome, November 6.—The ecclesiastical year is now opened, with Mass, made by the War, largely but not completely filled. All the college folk have returned, including a small band of German Hungarians, who have, however, dropped their conspicuous red crosses.

Most of the institutions are picking up in numbers, the most remarkable gains being registered by the French College, which jumped from fifty to its present figure of one hundred and fifty; and the English College which went from eighty to forty-five. The American increase is slight at present; but there is no reason why it should not regain its old figure of one hundred and fifty.

The French institutions are all in full swing, including the new Pontifical Oriental Institute, which opens upon its second year of life with a wide range of lectures and an excellent number of students, including those of the new Sapienza College and also two Orthodox students, whose attendance, in order that they might learn the truth, was especially authorized by the Pope, in the decree by which he founded the institute.

ONE YEAR OF PEACE

Twelve months have rolled by on their course into the night of obscurity, and the world still throbs from the lusts inflicted upon it by the perverseness of governments. One year ago the Central Powers gave up their dream of world conquest, and history shall record no successful rival to the old empire of the Romans.

Peace has brought dubious blessings to the nations at large. True, the horrors of War have been diminished or extinguished, to a great extent. Still, the fires are smoldering in various parts of the world, while the peoples of earth, many of them sick and helpless, cry aloud, How long, O Lord, how long.

America, suffering from minor wounds, possesses all the buoyancy of youth, and is quickly gaining her equilibrium. Comparatively few of our fellow countrymen have contemplated the supreme sacrifice. Our resources still are boundless and the energy of our citizens most commendable. America has much for which to thank God.

The world at large, however, has not fared so well. The Central Powers are still depressed by the horrors of defeat and of national disaster. The so-called new nations are quarreling among themselves about boundaries and privileges. Italy's life is pained by the threat of the revolutionaries and the origin of the revolutionaries and Ireland still scratches forth pitiful hands for liberation from the thralldom of ages. Hunger, suffering, disease still stalk abroad in the ranks of men, and usually souls would overturn the established laws of sane governments.

In spite of all, the world is groping towards the light. There is a glimmer in the gloom and it leads towards the full splendor of day. The world blow has been very severe and the recovery must be slow. If the final outcome of the upheaval shall be a raising of the level upon which the peoples of earth have lived and struggled, then indeed will the price have not been in vain. Nations have come to know one another intimately, and they have acquired a correspondingly higher regard for one another. The complete brotherhood of man may never be reached fully upon this earth; but men who have come to look at their fellow mortals face to face, rather than to gaze down into the abyss or look aloft to the heights that formerly separated the children of the great human family, —Catholic Bulletin.

WHAT TO DO WITH MERCIER?

"SEND HIM TO THE POPE"

The Cardinal, Mercier, in responding to the ovation accorded him in Boston, told for the first time how Marquis Francisco de la Barre, Spanish minister to Belgium at the outbreak of the War, suggested to the Belgian authorities that they "send Cardinal Mercier to the Pope."

A German baron called on the Marquis the Cardinal said, and asked: "What shall we do with Cardinal Mercier?"

"Well," replied the Marquis, "if the German Crown Prince committed an offense against the German government in Belgium, what would you

do? Would you seize him and put him in prison?"

"No," said the German baron, "we should send him to his father, the Kaiser, in Berlin."

"Well," responded the Marquis, "the Cardinal is a member of the Court of Rome. He is just as if he were a cousin of the Pope. Therefore, if the Cardinal has done something wrong, send him to the Pope."

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