

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

By Rev. F. P. Hickey, O. S. B.

THE SUNDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION

THE INNER LIFE

"Sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts." (1 Pet. iii, 15.)

The Ascension, glorious as it was to our Blessed Lord, was the ultimate parting with His visible Presence on earth. The parting bids us keep His memory in our hearts. The lives of men seem for the most part very much the same. We cannot tell who are the good or who are the wicked—that depends on the inner life of the soul. And that inner life depends on this, do we "sanctify the Lord Christ in our hearts?" That we do by keeping His blessed memory as a motive and incentive to live for Him alone.

That His blessed memory should dwell in our hearts, it has to be cultivated. Continual and actual recalling a person or a circumstance can result in the presence, as it were, of that person dwelling as a living memory in our hearts. A good mother can understand this. And we hear of people that have such affection for each other that, though separated, if one is suffering, the other is unhappy; if one is in danger, the other is oppressed with fear; if one is dying, he may appear to the other, or that other feel what is happening and mention it. Poor Jesus Christ! the Saints, we hope, had such a living, loving memory of Thee as this. But with our own selves days may come and go—yes, we may say prayers, go to the church, without the speaking memory of Jesus Christ awakening our hearts. Our inner life is in a lethargy. We must practise thinking of our Lord, meditating on His words, actions, events of His Life and Death. And by degrees His image will be imprinted on the retina of our soul, and develop more and more as we actually recall and study Him time after time.

And this remembering our Blessed Lord will have a great effect on our prayers. The great means of sanctification is prayer. Many people say plenty of prayers, but the quality is sadly deficient. Habit, repetition, hurry, reduces many prayers to a mere matter of form. And not standing our mind before we begin is answerable for much poor, distracted prayer. St. James tells us to "ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." (Jas. i, 6, 7.) Before we begin, then, let us recall the memory of our Lord. Behold Him with the eyes of our soul, address Him, appeal to Him, watch Him. Such a remembering would make of our prayers a living cry that would make its way straight to the heart of Jesus. It is not the words we use, but the intensity, the fixity of purpose, the whole-heartedness with which we say them that makes the power of prayer. Read prayers that the Saints have used, and perhaps we may see nothing special in them, and yet those very Saints may have worked miracles by those very words because their heart was in them.

Sanctify Christ in your hearts by thinking of Him, recalling Him, dwelling on His words and deeds—in one word, by having His memory enshrined there—and your prayers will become powerful and efficacious, and will ascend, sweet as incense, before the throne of God.

Then there is a third step in the inner life. Imitate Jesus Christ. Of course, we know that the imitation must be of the humblest kind—a long, long way off. But the publican stood a long way off, yet his prayer was pleasing unto God. So we too might trace the footsteps of Christ, and try to follow on slowly and laboriously. We must cultivate the same aims and interests; the things He loved we must try to love; the things He turned from we must hate and loathe and fear; the ways He had, patient, meek, humble, must be the ways that we must try to cultivate; the friends He had must be our friends too, and chief of all His Blessed Mother Mary. This is trying to be like, trying to imitate, our Lord and Master. And He that created us, when He sees that we are trying to improve, and even are taking Himself for a model, could He not, and will He not, with a blessing transform us more and more to His own image and likeness?

There is a simple, practical, direct way of starting all this, and carrying it on, from a very very humble beginning to the real sanctity of the inner life; it is nothing more nor less than a pure intention. What was said of prayer can be said of a pure intention; we must make it, not through custom merely, but with the vivid memory of Christ our Lord before us. Then that very offering, intention, transforms our daily life. Any form of prayer will do, but take, for example, the "morning offering" of the Apostleship of Prayer: "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." Those few words, if said devoutly, and with the memory of Christ vividly before us, would consecrate a whole day to God, and make of it a prayer and sacrifice. It would raise up everything we do, and make it worthy of God's acceptance and reward.

It would be the inner life of each day. Our occupations and business would go on as usual, but in our hearts there would be the remembering, the praying to, the imitating Jesus Christ our Lord, because we had offered all our prayers and works and sufferings to Him. Then would begin the mystic circle of love. The more we loved our Lord, the oftener we should renew the pure intention and the offering, and the oftener we renewed it the more we should love Him. And thus the inner life would grow and be strengthened, and thus day by day we should "sanctify the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts."

THE ASCENSION

FRIDAY, MAY 20TH

Ascension Day commemorates the last great event in the earthly life of Christ. It marks the consummation of His mission, the close of the final chapter of His life work. He had come down from Heaven to redeem mankind. Redemption accomplished, He returned whence He had come. "He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty."

It was forty days since that memorable morning when the holy women and the anxious apostles had gazed into the empty tomb. There could be no longer any doubt that this was the Christ of Calvary, who died, but who lived again. For, since then, many times Christ had manifested Himself to His followers. To Mary Magdalen, to Peter, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, to the apostles assembled in the upper room, to James and to over five hundred brethren on a mountain in Galilee. But the manifestation that most appeals to us is that which occurred by the Lake of Gennesareth, when the apostles, after a night of fruitless labor, decried, through the morning mist, a Man walking along the shore. It was Jesus, and a fire was kindled and fish were heaved, and the Master ate and chatted familiarly with His disciples. Peter, who had thrice denied, now thrice protested his love for Christ, and was rewarded by being confirmed chief shepherd of the flock.

But these happy days of reunion were not to continue. Christ's plans for His Church were completed, the "little while" during which He was to be with them had expired. And so one day He walked with His disciples to the Mount of Olives. It was there He had begun His passion; it was there they should witness His final triumph. There, while they gazed in wondering admiration, Jesus was lifted up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. They stood gazing after Him, reluctant to leave until the angels' words aroused them. And then they went down from the Mount, determined that where He had gone they also should go. They preached whatsoever He had commanded, they spread His Kingdom; they died rather than deny His name. And now they see Him again, and their hearts rejoice, and their joy no man can take from them.

The thought of the Ascension should inspire us to look up, and lift up our hearts. It should encourage us to struggle, by revealing to us the fruit of victory. It should make the children heart-hungry for the home where their Father dwells.—The Tablet.

THE FRUITS OF VICTORY

Shall religion alone, of all the forces which brought victory to the armies arrayed against the Teutonic Powers, be deprived of its fruits? Those who preface every sentence, written or oral, with "I am beginning to fear" have richness and variety for their pessimism, particularly when attention is focussed on the broad expanse which leads to the higher things. But periodically when we begin to fear, we seek precautionary measures. There are revealing signs that the friends of religion are keenly anxious about developments in certain countries. France for one, Mexico for another, and those other regions, too, classed together as the East, the former dominions of the Turkish crown.

Those who were witness of the welcome which New York gave her returning soldiers, a few weeks ago, that sovereign honor greater than which the country cannot give, may have noted among the splendid legends borne on transparencies, several which proclaimed in ringing truth, "We fought the war for God." To understand this solemn assurance from a conquering army, it is necessary to turn backward, two years, just when the nation was taking its first trembling steps in preparing for the conflict. The French mission had arrived in Washington to ask for the supreme gift of man, since France had sent forth her last great corps and they were too few to stem the tide. Viviani and the general lovable hero of the first Marne, Marshal Joffre, toured the country and everywhere were received with wild enthusiasm and generous promises of aid. All their comings and goings were minutely set forth for the American public in order to keep alive the American desire to aid her old ally, France, and to fight the battle of civilization as well. But there was one speech of M. Viviani which was not so blatantly reported, indeed it was most carefully suppressed though several thousand people were aware of it and many

SUFFERED TERRIBLE AGONY

"Fruit-a-lives" Alone Gave Him Quick Relief

Buckingham, Que., May 3rd, 1918. "For seven years, I suffered terribly from Severe Headaches and Irritation of the Stomach, and I had chronic Constipation. I tried many remedies but nothing did me good. Finally, a friend advised 'Fruit-a-lives'. I took this grand fruit medicine and it made me well. To everyone who has miserable health with Constipation and Indigestion and Bad Stomach, I say take 'Fruit-a-lives', and you will get well."

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thousands of soldiers heard of it after they had arrived in France. Mr. Medill McCormick, at present a member of the United States Senate and son of Robert McCormick, some time Ambassador to France, gave a fete for the French mission during the progress of which the former Premier of the French Republic was asked to address the guests. M. Viviani was moved to reminiscence and his vein of satire led to the masterful way in which France had driven God from the State, how after a tremendous struggle she had driven God from the schools and "Now," he concluded impressively, "we shall drive God from the churches."

Being a diplomat, M. Viviani was aware that the American is a Christian nation, that it has so written itself in its fundamental laws and in its charter and on its coinage where may be found "In God we trust." It is true that some preposterous performances have been credited to religion, Alexandra Campbell, Alexandra Dowie, Mary Baker Eddy. Those who heard the French Athlete were principally public men, and no one holding office under this Government could utter such sentiments and retain his hold on his constituency. To their credit, it can be recorded that they considered such expressions blasphemous, and they declined to remain and be presented to the representative of Gallic civilization and progress. Those who heard the utterance and many others who heard of it, were always silenced in their objections by the assurance that Viviani, a well-known Free-thinker, did not present a typical side of France and as the war went on, the American public was assured from a variety of sources, that France had sorrowfully recognized her errors and that religion would again be respected and protected.

Those who watch the snail-like progress at the Peace Conference see no sign of this. They tell that Foch and his pious soldiery and the God-fearing soldiery of every land, described in the letters and official reports of every kind of chaplain, are deemed worthy instruments to wage successful war, but that peace must be confided to the thinkers, the economists, in brief to the seoffer and the infidel, like Viviani.

From British sources comes the wail that France, ever thrifty and far-seeing is gambling on the prestige of Foch to make the peace terms so cruel and exacting that the Germans cannot pay, and thus other nations will be deprived of their share of the reparation. In the restored provinces which the Allied armies have presented to France is the ambition of Viviani to be realized? Is it to be realized in that ancient domain of the Church, the cities of Jerusalem, Damascus, and Aleppo which France is claiming by her old title of defender of the East? Are the followers of religion to be removed from the persecution of the Turk to fall under the power of the atheistic Government of France? A large proportion of soldiers have answered in their transparencies, "We fought the war for God." Despite this, however, in many circles there is an awakened alarm, lest the fruits of this victory be wrested from those whose efforts were put forth that God might be restored to the French State, also to the schools and the churches.

It seems monstrous that some organized effort is not yet apparent in Catholic communities, French and American, to save religion. It must be said for the body of Protestant missions with its grand sachem in Boston, that an alert eye indeed is put to see that Viviani's program does not touch Protestant missions in the East. Indeed, if Catholics are awaking to their unique opportunity to aid the persecuted of their religion in France, in Mexico and in many other parts of the world where the steel glove is safely covered with velvet, the union of diplomacy and religious interests as typified in the conduct of its Bulgarian and Turkish Protestant missions by the Boston Board, may be suitably offered as worthy of imitation.

The most luminous explanations of the reasons which intervened to prevent the United States from declaring war on Germany's allies, Bulgaria and the Turkish Empire, come from a British source, Sir Edwin Pears, in the Contemporary Review for November, 1918. It may be

bracketed in here, that had an American journal published that naive paper, the laws of espionage would have reached out to silence the organ during the course of the War at least, if not forever. Sir Edwin Pears says simply, and as though the entire world shared his amazing knowledge, that the Boston Board of Missions with its superb equipment in Robert College, Constantinople had wrought such pressure to bear on Washington, had made so plain that only by permitting these missions to continue undisturbed—an impossibility if a state of war existed—could Bulgaria ever "find herself" and realize her true position among the Balkans. Sir Edwin opines that since the President, the Vice-President and the Secretary of State were all concerned in the success of these missions, neutrality was accomplished, though the world stood amazed at the spectacle and some of the Allies were restive and apprehensive. The article goes at length into the men and women who reared so strong a bulwark in Robert College, that even in a war so terrible and unrelenting as that waged in Europe, the hand of religion could overreach that of diplomacy and even the mailed fist. Imagine the outcry were some author to write of Catholic interests in Mexico and attempt such a flagrant usurpation of the privileges of the entire nation by a small group. Yet, it is logical to use the same weapons. It is readily imagined that neither President Wilson nor his party were over-zealous of the British essayist, and that if they had known of the paper in time they would have suppressed it. Bulgarian neutrality was a burning issue in Washington, and the spectacle of the friendliness of the Minister from Ferdinand's country, a former professor in Robert College, with the Lausings caused a most painful impression to the Allied nations cognizant of it. But Mr. Lansing, premier of the Wilson Cabinet, is frankly Calvinistic, as are the Easterners, and finally into which he married. Witness his first public statement after the signing of the armistice, not addressed to the general public or any official body, but to the faculty and students of the Presbyterian Seminary, in Auburn, New York, celebrating its diamond jubilee. Again it is from British journals that the most luminous interpretation of this incident reaches the world. Mr. Lansing, according to the Westminster Gazette, would try and condemn Germany by the terms of the Westminister Confession and would have a peace such as Calvin could endorse, a peace with some mercy, but with justice playing the stellar role, and full recognition of the stern God who punishes all sin.

Now that Sir Edwin Pears has so adroitly pointed out the way, it should not be too great a task for all religions to step up beside the diplomat, the law maker and the present readjuster of national boundaries. M. Viviani, though of a race and presumably the most carefully accomplished in social graces, has taught Americans that when politics are at stake, delicacy of feeling or tactful regard for national prejudices are cobwebs to be swept away. There are mediums for the diffusion of sentiment in France, and a lengthy roll of citizens repudiating the sentiments he uttered in Washington and asking his elimination from the peace proceedings and from future influence in shaping French policy, could not be taken amiss. The gentle art of minding one's own business is not applicable in any phase of national development which infringes on the free exercise of religion. If influence were so powerful a lever for the Protestant Mission Board of Boston, why can it not be used for Alsace-Lorraine and the ancient churches of the East, where the streets have been trod by the Redeemer and by those whom He sent forth to teach all nations? The League of Nations is not the impeccable document its advocates portray it, if it does not challenge M. Viviani and put on record, that the War was fought to bring the world back to God. As a virile Catholic writer once expressed it, "The world may think it can get along without God, but it cannot. The universe itself under God is like the chord of the dominant seventh, always leading forward, always inviting onward, the chord of progress. God is the tonic triad, the chord of repose."—M. E. Downing in America.

AN ANSWERED PRAYER

One winter day, some years ago, an English tourist was tramping through a poor district of Constantinople. He passed the church. In the churchyard he saw an old woman praying before the statue of the Blessed Virgin. Of a kindly disposition, he stopped and asked the old woman why she was praying to the image. "Sure, your honor, I'm not praying to the image; I'm praying to the Mother of God, and asking her to help me in my distress, for if I don't have ten shillings for the agent on Monday morning, I'll be turned out of my little cabin on the road."

THE ANOMALIES OF HISTORY

One of the anomalies of history is that sons and daughters of extreme bigots become converts to the Catholic faith. The Liverpool Catholic Times, many years ago, observed this and made the following comment: "In the conversion of Mary Howitt, daughter of the notorious author of 'The History of Priestcraft,' another instance is added to the many on record. The misguided zeal of their parents, or their blind fanaticism, may have led the children to examine for themselves the exaggerated allegations brought against the Church. The result of an impartial inquiry, coupled with humility, naturally leads to the discovery of truth. The sons of the great Wilberforce are examples in point, and the only son who did not become a Catholic—Bishop Wilberforce—but, on the contrary, developed a spirit of bitter bigotry against the Church either out of hostility to his brothers or out of policy, lived to see his daughter and her husband, the Rev. Mr. Pyle, become Catholics. Instances of this kind might easily be multiplied, for members both of High Church and

"I'm thanking the Blessed Mother for answering my prayer and helping me in my distress."
"But She did not help you—I gave you the money!"
"To be sure you did, your honor, but it was Her that put the thought into your good, kind heart. God bless you!"—The Monitor.

CATHOLIC MADE WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY POSSIBLE

In a series of articles by Mgr. A. Farges, Prelate to His Holiness the Pope, in the Echo de Paris, on telepathy and second sight, says the London Universe, "we learn of an ancient scientific invention by a Catholic which is generally attributed to Signor Marconi, the inventor, or—in view of the information given us by Mgr. Farges—part-inventor of wireless telegraphy. After the Italian scientist had discovered the method of sending out the messages, the problem still remained as to an instrument for receiving them, obviously an essential for the practical utility of his discovery. The instrument for responding to the ethereal vibrations, the prelate tells us, 'was a discovery due to the genius of a Frenchman, M. Branly, professor at the Catholic Institute of Paris.' The world has resounded with the praises of Marconi—and we do not deny his deserts—but has heard little of the man without whose help Marconi's wonderful invention would have been valueless. And this is by no means the only instance of one man's getting all the honor for what is just by half his own work."

Low, by their unjust and extravagant calumnies against the Church, have led many near and dear to them to a knowledge of divine truth."

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