

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

REV. J. J. BURKE, PHOENIA, ILL.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

"Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee." (Luke 1, 28)

We celebrate to-day, my dear friends, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the feast of the Blessed Virgin. In the year 1854 the great and glorious Pius IX, surrounded by bishops from every part of the world, proclaimed to all Christendom the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Since the Council of Ephesus, in the year 431, declared her Mother of God, probably no such rejoicings were known through the whole Christian world as filled the hearts of the true children of God on the 8th of December, 1854, when the last and brightest gem was added to the crown of Mary by our own beloved Pius IX.

It must not be forgotten that, when the Church through her councils or her pontiffs, promulgates a dogma of faith to be believed by all her children, she does not create anything new. She simply defines what has always been the belief of the faithful. When the Council of Ephesus decreed that in Christ there is but one person and that Mary is the Mother of God; when the Council of Chalcedon decreed that in Christ there are two natures, the Divine and the human, and when the third Council of Constantinople defined that Christ had two wills, these were not new doctrines, though they were new definitions of dogmas. So it is in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. It is nothing new. It has always been believed by the faithful. The Immaculate Conception means that, through the merits of Jesus Christ, Mary was preserved free from the guilt of original sin, that she was always pure and never under the power of Satan.

God created the first man pure, free from sin and its effects. But he transgressed the law of God, and by his transgression all his posterity are born in sin and conceived in iniquity. For, as St. Paul says, "By one man sin entered the world and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned." (Rom. V, 12)

But God promised that the woman should crush the head of the serpent. Now if she was to crush the head of the serpent, it was fit that she should never be under his power, that she should be always pure, free from sin.

There have been exceptions to all universal laws. At the time of the universal deluge, Noah was saved; Lot was saved from the destruction of Sodom; and the Blessed Virgin is an exception to the universal law that all sinned in Adam. Jeremiah (Jer. 1, 5) said, "Before I formed thee in the womb, I knew thee, and before thou wast born, I sanctified thee in the womb." Was it any more difficult for God to sanctify Mary at the moment of her Conception, of the union of her soul with her body? God chose His Own Mother. If He had the power to choose her, did He not also have the power to preserve her from the stain of original sin? And does it not appear to you most fitting that God the Holy Ghost should preserve His spouse, and God the Son, His Mother from all sin?

It is not unreasonable, my dear friends, to honor, to love the saints of God and to believe that they love us. Especially is it not unreasonable to believe that the Blessed Mother of God had greater privileges and higher claims on our hearts than the other saints. It is but natural, then, that we arrive at belief in the spotlessness of the Blessed Virgin even from the beginning of her existence upon earth.

"Hail, full of Grace," the angel said to her. If she was full of grace, no vacancy was left for sin. Sin depends on the absence of grace. Hence, if Mary was full of grace she was never subject to sin, she was always pure, her conception Immaculate.

What a beautiful model Mary is for Christians and especially for Christian women. Catholic mothers should not allow their daughters to form their idea of the type of their sex from the novel when they have before them Mary the true type of female excellence. In Mary you find all that is tender and yet all that is firm. In her humility she refused the highest honors, while in patience she endured more anguish and agony than any other woman on earth.

I am sure that one who has Mary for the model and who proposes her as a model to her children, will have the rough places in life's path made smooth and the way to eternal happiness made plain by the intercession of the Immaculate Mother of God.

SOME OF WHAT HE SAW

Father Bernard Vaughan, lecturing in Glasgow (Scotland) on "What To See In America," remarked that "it spoke highly for the (United States) Constitution that laws originally framed for a few millions satisfied the inflow of peoples from all nations under the sun. As an illustration of the 'inflow' he found that in some mining districts money orders were sent off on pay days in thirty different languages, and in some districts there were Catholic sermons preached in twenty-five different languages."

The languages were different, but the faith was the same—the same in all tongues and races and regions and climes—one faith, one God, one Shepherd. Observing on the progress of Catholicity in the States, Father Vaughan explained that: "While divorce and racial suicide were weakening and paralyzing other forces,

Catholics, with their scorn of these practices, were gaining ground and gathering strength."

Catholic homes are secure at least from one destroyer by the Catholic "scorn" of divorce and the condemnation of it by the Catholic Church. Father Vaughan met a skeptic in his travels—a typical Yankee, "who asked him 'if he really believed in a life beyond,' to which the reply was that: 'Without it life here would be a foreword, without the book, a prologue without the play, a voyage ending in shipwreck, and a journey terminating in a precipice.'"

It is to be hoped that if this did not convert the Yankee, it set him to serious thinking.—Freeman's Journal.

TEMPERANCE

ONE MAN'S FAILURE

The Cedar Rapids (Ia.) Republican preaches a powerful temperance sermon and it ought to be read in every home in America. The Republican says: "Thomas Seabrooke died in Chicago the other day in miserable surroundings. A dozen years or so ago he was easily the foremost comedian on the stage. He was a born comedian. There was no horseplay effect in his acting. At that time he was able to make \$75,000 a year, for he could draw audiences that would warrant a manager in paying him such a salary. The announcement that Seabrooke was in the cast always filled a theater in those days.

But Seabrooke made one mistake. He thought he could get away with John Barrymore and put him under the table. He knew that other men had failed, and failed miserably, in the unequal contest, but he thought that he was to be the one exception, the man who could win the victory. But he didn't win. They never do win who start out on such a trial of strength. The end is always the same, dishonor, humiliation, shame and suffering of every kind. Seabrooke died in delirium tremens. He had an supreme agony of mind, when all the devils and snakes of hell tormented him, and then he was dead, dead at a time when he ought to be in the beginnings of a mellow maturity, the kind of maturity in which Joe Jefferson was at his best and during which he gave his friends and admirers their greatest pleasure out of art.

But Joe Jefferson didn't drink the stuff, while Thomas Q. Seabrooke drank it and was fool enough to believe that he could get away with it.

HELPING HANDS OR STUMBLING BLOCKS

Bishop McGavick, addressing the Illinois Union, said that total abstinence are not only working for their own good, but for others. They are a staff to others' hands, a help to others' feet, a light shining in the darkness and showing the way to other wandering and lost travellers, the way upward and the way onward, the way to right and the way to God and to everlasting life. The man who drinks is putting a stumbling block in others' way, and they walk along, they may fall. Not only that, but he is digging a well right in his brother's path, right where his feet are going and into which he is likely to fall. That is what the man or woman does who takes liquor, and the man or woman who refuses to take it is reaching out a hand to the neighbor, to help him along and guide him safely over the pathway of human life.—St. Paul Bulletin.

LET US BE PREPARED

In the season of Advent, now opening before us, we are preparing for two great events, the first coming of our Blessed Lord from heaven to earth as a tiny infant, when "the word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and that second coming, whose day and whose hour no man knoweth.

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TUMOR IN THE STOMACH

Completely Removed When She Took "Fruit-a-tives"

NEWBURY, ONT., April 4th, 1913.

"Some years ago, I was sick in bed, and thought I was going to die. I had a growth in my stomach, which the doctors said was a tumor and they said that the only thing to do was to go to the hospital and have the tumor cut out. I dreaded an operation although both doctors said it was the only cure. I said I would die before being operated on. At this time, my mother in law, Mrs. A. McDonald, sent me some 'Fruit-a-tives' and induced me to try them as she had heard of another woman who had been cured of a similar growth in the stomach by taking 'Fruit-a-tives'."

"To please my mother, I began to take 'Fruit-a-tives' with the happy result that they cured me. I have not been to see a doctor since and my health is first class. I recommend 'Fruit-a-tives' every time I get a chance and I will be glad to have you publish this letter as some other woman may now be a sufferer from the same trouble and 'Fruit-a-tives' will cure her." MRS. A. McDONALD.

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Sacraments and the use of frequent prayer.

On Monday next we are to keep the great feast of the Immaculate Conception, that beautiful holiday of obligation which shows to us the value that God sets on personal holiness, on personal freedom from sin's blight. By a special privilege He preserved His mother free from even the slightest taint of original sin. That is what the Immaculate Conception means: no slightest mark of inherited, original sin ever marred her soul; and neither, afterwards, did any stain of slightest sin or imperfection sully the Immaculate Mother of God. In this Advent season let us often pray to God, through His Mother's intercession, to make us holy, and ready to meet Him at the last great day.—Sacred Heart Review.

GENERAL INTENTION FOR DECEMBER

RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED BY HIS HOLINESS PIUS X.

FREQUENT COMMUNION FOR CHILDREN

In this age when children are exposed to so many spiritual dangers, when the task of rearing them up through youth to manhood and womanhood, meets with so many obstacles, parents should seize every means available to preserve in their little ones the double treasure of innocence and faith. This is a duty that for various reasons they cannot shirk. Temptations from within and from without attack children, they are still weak in body and in experience, in will and in reasoning powers; the awakening of instincts, hitherto undreamt of, with its insatiable cravings for less noble things, surprises them early in life, and unless the opportune antidote be provided, many a career will be irretrievably ruined, many a premature wreck will lie strewn along the by-ways of life.

Besides, parents know well that the training children receive in their early years molds their after careers; they know, too, that the children of to-day are the men and women of tomorrow, who must receive from those whom God has placed over them not merely the true faith but the sound moral training as well, which will influence and direct their lives and the lives of the generations who shall succeed them. How can we expect Catholic faith and Catholic principles to be handed down to others, if through the neglect of parents in this age, or the case of children, whatever fosters religion and sound living in children, be stifled in its germ and never given a chance to develop into habits of virtue? "What we need," writes Father de Zulzeta, in his excellent work, "The Divine Educator"—"is to form generations of young people living in the grace of God not for a few days or at intervals, but without a break for months and years." What we need, in fact, are children who will develop into men and women who are filled with a lively faith, capable of self-denial, and serving as examples of purity and courage. Above all, in the presence of the Holy Communion, we must put the burden on the other shoulder and exaggerate the obligation. The Church does not oblige her children under pain of sin to approach the Holy Table frequently, as if, for instance, it were a question of their Easter duty. She does not command them; she merely invites them and remains satisfied with fortifying her invitation with cogent motives. Her wish is that all her little children, as well as her elders, should receive Holy Communion frequently, even daily, to the end that, being united to God by means of this Sacrament, they may derive strength to resist their passions, to cleanse themselves from the stains of sin, and to avoid those graver ones to which frailty is liable.

FROM THE PANTRY TO FRONT-PORCH

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ent age, we want children who have been preserved continually in innocence, and who enter upon their youth strong enough to grapple with the dangers of high schools and universities, and of contact later with the business life of the world.

On the parents of to-day rest the responsibilities of the future; they have their role plainly mapped out for them, and the Church true to her vocation as guide of souls, undertakes to teach them the easiest way to fill it. In the first place, she insists on the teaching of catechism and on the imparting of sound advice and sound principles. But she is well aware that, while Paul plants and Apollo waters, it is God Himself Who gives the increase. It is not enough for them to know, they must also be ready to accomplish; the intellect may be informed, but the will must not be allowed to remain sluggish. The Church then, tells parents that the easiest and best way to strengthen the wills of their children is to cultivate in them a desire for the frequent reception of Holy Communion.

She urges parents and teachers to permit children to make their first Communion at an early age, and to thus open the way for them to approach the holy table very often afterwards, even daily. Not merely parents but all who have the care of little ones should make Communion for children possible, easy and attractive; for it is from frequent and daily Communion that children will draw strength to practise those spotless and dauntless virtues which should leaven Christian society.

No distinction is made either as to their age, or their supposed vocation in after life, or their social status, or the measure of their advancement in virtue. Their weakness and inexperience call loudly for sympathy and help; and because children are weak and inexperienced they need to be nourished with the Bread of the Strong. This is the call of the present hour. But the present must be a preparation for the future. No matter what the future has in store for children, they are living in the present, and their souls must not be allowed to starve. A certain number will probably, when grown to manhood and womanhood, remain faithful to the practice of frequent Communion; all of them shall at least have been trained in the true principles concerning this holy practice. Or it may be that many of them—the greater number perhaps—will abandon the practice of frequent Communion; but having once had the experience of its beneficial effects, they will sooner or later return to it, under the inspiration of grace or when impelled to it by more pressing temporal or spiritual needs.

Previous to the publication of the Papal decrees of 1906 and 1910, Communion for children was a rather formidable affair, hedged in as it was by so much traditional red tape. The project of frequent or daily Communion for them was not entertained. On the contrary, a thorough instruction in catechism, such as their elders often did not deem proper, was insisted on, as well as the attainment of a certain age, as if in the things of God wisdom were necessarily measured by the number of one's years. The child's dispositions of soul were controlled with such mathematical precision that the reception of the great Sacrament of the Eucharist became somewhat of a burden both for children and for those who had the care of them. But the Pope of the Eucharist did away with these traditions so opposed to the spiritual welfare of the little ones. How plain and uncompromising are these extracts from the Roman documents: "Frequent Communion is recommended even to children. They should be encouraged thereto. When preparing children for First Communion parents and teachers will take special pains to implant in their pure hearts a keen desire for daily Communion and to banish all vain scruples concerning this holy practice. They will see to it that they make their First Communion as soon as they are ready, and that they renew it every day if possible. Every effort should be made to promote frequent and daily Communion in Catholic educational institutions."

And yet, notwithstanding the forceful tenor of these declarations, we must not put the burden on the other shoulder and exaggerate the obligation. The Church does not oblige her children under pain of sin to approach the Holy Table frequently, as if, for instance, it were a question of their Easter duty. She does not command them; she merely invites them and remains satisfied with fortifying her invitation with cogent motives. Her wish is that all her little children, as well as her elders, should receive Holy Communion frequently, even daily, to the end that, being united to God by means of this Sacrament, they may derive strength to resist their passions, to cleanse themselves from the stains of sin, and to avoid those graver ones to which frailty is liable.

The case, however, assumes a different aspect for those who are responsible for the spiritual welfare of children. The Church enjoins on them the duty of urging children to go to Communion often; and Cardinal Gennari does not mince matters in his commentary on the two Papal decrees, when he tells superiors of religious establishments and spiritual directors that it is for them an affair of conscience to promote frequent Communion among those under their care. Parish priests, confessors, teachers, are to exhort children, after their first reception to it, to the devout and salutary practice of frequent Communion, but it is the duty of parents especially to take measures

President

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that their children who have made their First Communion shall approach the holy table very often, even daily if possible. Their negligence in this matter would cause children to forfeit the chief fruit of the papal decrees, which is to qualify them for an unbroken Eucharistic life, the best protection of their faith and innocence.

We members of the League of the Sacred Heart should do our share in this heavenly work among children. One of the chief objects of our organization is to draw Catholics to the holy table as often as possible. Our First Fridays, our Communion Days, and those special dates named on the Monthly Leaflet are indications of the spirit that animates members, just as they point out the kind of work we are engaged in. The recent legislation of the Holy Father proves that our League possesses the true spirit, and that we have been all along working in the right direction in urging frequent and daily Communion among all classes of Catholics. While still keeping up this spiritual crusade, we may easily add another element to our work by turning our efforts in the direction of the little ones of Christ. Let each one, according to opportunity, carry out the wishes of the Holy Father regarding Communion among children, by fostering in them a love for Our Lord in the tabernacle, by speaking of the consolations and the profit derived from frequent Communion, and by exciting in them the desire for this heavenly Food. Nothing, we feel, could be more pleasing to the Sacred Heart of the loving Master, Who would have little children come to Him to be nourished as often as possible with His precious Body and Blood. It is their pledge of eternal life.

E. J. DEVINE, S. J.

THE REMEDY FOR POISONED MORALS

Commenting upon the grave menace to public morals that lies in the evil literature so widely read nowadays, the New York Times' "Review of Books" has these words of wisdom:

"Public opinion averse to the circulation of books of bad tendencies and magazine literature of an obnoxious sort can be exerted most effectively if the books are left unsold on the booksellers' hands, and the magazine publishers are brought sharply to understand that filth does not pay. . . . The author of a book of immoral tendency is culpable, and the publisher shares his culpability. But blame also is the due of people who read the book, discuss it, and encourage others to read it. He who touches pitch is defiled, and the idea that some of us are immune from defilement is erroneous."

To the foregoing America utters a fervent Amen. We do not agree, however, with the writer's contention that the publication of those who publish and distribute filthy books and periodicals is unwise and inexpedient. The general public, we maintain, should not find it easy to buy such works. The young and innocent should not be exposed to the temptation of reading them. But while the salacious magazine and the unclean novel are advertised, exhibited and sold on every newsstand and in every book store, shall good men do nothing but refrain from buying the poison? Shall the weak and curious, however, be invited to infect themselves with it as freely as they desire?

The chemist who sells dangerous drugs to irresponsible people is sent to jail. The publishers and distributors of literary poison should be dealt with similarly. With the least notoriety possible let the objectionable magazine or book be completely withdrawn from circulation and then let those who publish it be prosecuted for corrupting the public morals.

The Times' writer entertains the hope that there will soon be a "healthy reaction from the baneful influence of so-called realism," of which there is just now such a disgusting orgy, and for our comfort calls attention to the fact that the American literature that has stood the test of time is free from all indecency. Grateful for the reminder, we share his hope that present conditions will speedily improve. The most effective means for bringing about this change the Times' reviewer tells us when he writes with uncompromising courage: "What is needed more than anything else to restore the social equilibrium is a revival of the religious spirit."

Excellent! Nothing truer was ever said. If the American people could only be made to believe sincerely and practically that the publishing, selling and reading of filthy literature is a serious sin of scandal and impurity which a just God will surely punish, bad books and periodicals would largely cease to be

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