

JANUARY 6, 1894.

FIVE-MINUTE SERMONS.

How Our Saviour Takes Away Sin.

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who taketh away the sins of the world. (St. John 1, 29.)

After our Blessed Lord was baptized by St. John the Baptist, beloved brethren, He retired into the desert, where He remained forty days in prayer and fasting. At the end of this time He directed His steps towards the river Jordan, where John was baptizing. Here a large concourse of the Jewish people had assembled to listen to the preaching of the forerunner of Christ. In the midst of these St. John, inspired by the spirit of God, and professing His deep ardent faith, testified of our Lord that He is the Lamb of God, and that it is He who taketh away the sins of the world.

What a glorious testimony this, and how cheerfully received by the fervent Christian! Have you ever pondered over these beautiful words, and made them the subject of your meditation? Have you ever tried to find out their true meaning, and thus make them profitable to your souls? Yes, truly, Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God. He is the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world. For you and for me He voluntarily left the bosom of His Father, and lowered and even debased Himself by assuming a nature like our own. For us He endured the sufferings and privations of His childhood; for us He sent up many heartfelt prayers to God the Father, before the beginning of His public life; for us He labored and preached; for us He suffered the ingratitude of His disciples, the ignominies of the Jews, the insults of the soldiers, the hardships of the journey to Calvary, and, finally, ended His torments on the cross, with the cry "Consummatus est" (It is finished). This, and much more, did our Blessed Lord gladly undergo for us all. And how have you, dear brethren, requited such infinite love? Fathers, are you solicitous for the little household which Almighty God Himself has so fondly entrusted to your care? Then are you imitators of the patience and endurance of your Saviour during His bitter passion? Mothers, do you strive to make your children patterns of the Christian virtues of gentleness and forbearance? Then do you imitate the example of your Lord in bearing the defects of others and treating them with kindness and compassion. Oh! how watchful would we not be, dear brethren, could we but understand the infinite love our Lord Jesus Christ manifested for us during His life on earth! But St. John not only gave testimony to our Lord being the Lamb of God, but He further testified that it is He who takes away the sins of the world. He did not come simply to announce to the world the divine mission which He received from the Father; He also came to heal the infirmities of our souls by imparting to them the abundance of His grace. This office He performed Himself during His mortal life on earth. He it was that purified the soul of Mary Magdalene and enriched it with sanctifying grace. It was He who gave the living water of eternal life to the sinful Samaritan woman. And what our Lord did for these and many others, beloved brethren, He is now effecting, in the midst of us. It is not necessary to remind you of how our Lord chose a band of apostles, and made them the beginning of His Church; how He bestowed upon them and their successors the unheard-of and marvellous power of forgiving sins. Yes, brethren, the Bishops and priests of the Catholic Church are the visible representatives of Jesus Christ; they are the comfort of the afflicted, the strength of the weak; they have an efficacious remedy for those who are living in the state of mortal sin; by pronouncing the words of absolution they restore to the penitent and contrite sinner his lost inheritance of sonship, and make him an heir of the kingdom of heaven. Oh! how thankful we should be for the mercy and goodness of our God! What a tender love we ought to cherish for the Church, the Bride without spot! What respect is not due to those who hold the place of Christ in our behalf! How sufficiently prize the inestimable blessing of the tribunal of penance! Let us remember and meditate upon those three precious graces, beloved brethren, that they may be the source of sweet joy to us now, and the earnest of a happy eternity hereafter.

He Told the Truth.

An Irish gentleman had a splendid looking cow, but she kicked so much that it took a very long time and it was almost impossible to milk her, so he sent her to a fair to be sold and told his herdsmen to be sure to tell her without letting the buyer know her faults. He brought home a large price which he had got for it. His master was surprised, and said, "Are you sure you told all about her?" "Badad, I did, sir," said the herdsmen. "He asked me whether she was a good milker," "Begorra, sir," says I, "it would be tired milking her." "Seventy Years of Irish Life."

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How They Worked Their Way.

By MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN, LL. D.

IV.—CONTINUED.

"Dear me!" said Daphne Higgins, who lived on a thrifty farm down in the Hollow. "Dear me!" she said, as her husband came in at noon. "What do you think, Josh. The Beresfords are going to have a concert to-night, and we've got an invite."

"You don't mean to go, Dalph," said Josh, raising his head from the basin, in which he was washing his face. "The priest's going to be there."

"Well, I am going, Josh, priest or no priest. I wouldn't hurt Mrs. Beresford's feelings for the world. Nobody knows how kind she was to our Lib, when she was sick. I'm not afraid of the priest. If everybody was as good as the Beresfords, I wish there were more priests."

Daphne looked around uneasily as she spoke, as if she felt that she was making a shocking admission. "I'm not finding fault. You needn't snap my head off," answered Josh. "I'll go—I like the Beresfords, if they are Romanists."

The rumor of the Beresfords' concert set the neighborhood in a flutter of excitement. Mr. Thorne and Mrs. Thorne announced their intention of going, but Miss Sabina Thorne wept. Her new silk gown was not made yet, and she said she would not go to the house of such "stylish" city folk without it. Finally, she was persuaded to accept the invitation.

Father Hogan had a good tenor voice, and he volunteered to sing. A little after seven o'clock, Mr. Beresford was put in his place near the grate; and shortly afterwards, the guests began to come. The room was quite crowded. It looked very pretty, bright with a dozen candles. The right flowers glowing in the dark green of the festoons, excited special admiration.

"This is style," Miss Sabina Thorne, who had spent two weeks in town, was heard to say. Father Hogan entered, in his cassock, and a thrill of awe ran through the room. Mr. Beresford introduced each person to him. He was exceedingly genial and pleasant.

By the time that Dermot had given out the programmes, the guests had concluded that a priest might be very nice. The programmes were neatly written on small sheets of paper, on each of which Mary had drawn a flower design.

PROGRAMME.
Overture—"Semiramide" (piano).
Mary Beresford.

"Mary of Argyle" (Soprano).
Mrs. Beresford.

Popular airs—(Violin).
Brian Beresford.

"Last Rose of Summer" (tenor).
Father Hogan.

"Carnival of Venice" (piano).
Kath. Beresford.

Duet—"Back to Our Mountains."
A. and E. Doran.

Imitation of Mocking-bird (Violin).
Brian Beresford.

INTERMISSION.
Quartette—"Negro Melodias."
Dermot, Brian, and Kathleen Beresford,
and Mrs. Doran.

"Ten Little Indians" (Violin and voice).
Brian and Kathleen Beresford.

"She Wore a Crown of Roses."
Mrs. Beresford.

"Monastery Bells."
Mrs. Beresford.

"The Gypsy Countess."
Mrs. Beresford.

"Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep."
Dermot Beresford.

"Ave Maria" (Violin and voice).
Dermot Beresford, Gounod.
Mrs. Beresford and Brian.

should have to return from his law studies to work on it.

Dick came up to him, as he was thoughtfully putting his books into a box.

"Don't bother yourself," he said, putting his hand on Dermot's shoulder. "I know what is worrying you. My mother is happy with our uncle, Mr. Devlin, and she wants Anna and me to stay here. I promise you I'll stay until they make a lawyer of you in New York. I like the work, and I mean to be grateful."

Dermot turned to Dick with tears in his eyes. He took Dick's hands in both of his. He felt now that gratitude and kindness had levelled the barrier between them. Dick was no longer a poor, dependent youth, taken out of charity, but a friend, richer than a millionaire; for what money can buy hearts? What advantages are better than frankness and kindness?

Dermot's day for going came at last. He was sorry to leave his father, but he loved the city, and the humdrum work of the farm was tiresome and monotonous. Mrs. Beresford hated to part with him, yet she fondly hoped to see a career opened before him. Dermot looked old for his age, was staunch in his religious duties, and used to the ways of cities. She had little fear that he would forget his lessons. She smiled sweetly as she said—

"God bless you, Dick, and Brian went with him to the station—and the old life began again without him."

During that winter, all the inmates of the farm studied hard. Anna Doran made great progress. Nobody would have recognized in the gentle, lady-like girl, she to whom Mary had lent the white gown to make her First Communion.

Dick, too, made advances in his studies. The family was very happy.

"Cheerfulness" was the motto of the household.

At Christmas Dermot came back, with a good account of himself. They noticed that he left reluctantly.

In February, the cauliflower was planted.

Mr. Beresford, who gained some strength as the spring approached, gave Mr. Fitts a little, two-story, wooden house that stood on the edge of his farm. There Job and his father took up their abode, and watched the precious plants.

The kindness and patience of the Beresfords had their effect on the old man. Gradually, seeing that they were never idle, he went to work. As for Job, he was a changed boy. He spent two nights of the week in the Beresfords' sitting-room.

One day, Father Hogan asked Brian and Anna if they would be sponsors for Job. He had quietly resolved to become a Catholic. Mr. Fitts followed him into the Church, and afterwards led a very exemplary life. It was he who in later days collected most of the money through the country, to build a chapel near the Beresfords'. Mr. and Mrs. Thorne began to go to Mass.

"I'm only waiting till Easter," Mrs. Thorne said. "I feel that there must be Truth in your Church, since you, who naturally know better than any of us, are so good. I like and I will join your Church at Easter."

"Beresford's" is a place of consolation and comfort for the neighbors.

The cauliflower experiment was successful. The Beresfords needed no money after that. Dick's share of the profits enabled him to buy a smaller farm next to "Beresford's."

Brian and he are looked upon as the most promising young farmers of the place.

Mr. Dow did you do at all?" asked Mr. Dow when he came to pay a visit to his nephew and niece, accompanied by their mother. He looked at the smiling fields—at the happy faces of all who had assembled on the porch after supper, and heard the gay greeting that a neighbor sent to Mr. Beresford.

"You must have had a hard time. How did you and the boys work your way?"

"God helped us," said Mr. Beresford, reverently, "and we tried to live according to His precepts—to fulfill the end for which He made us."

"It was a lucky day when I lent you that white gown," said Mary to Anna. "What a day! we have done without you and Dick."

"But what could we have done without you?" asked Mrs. Doran.

"The setting sun flashes on a figure coming up the road. It is Dermot."

"I have passed!" he cries. "I'm a lawyer now!"

Mrs. Beresford looked at her son wistfully. She had hoped he would be a priest. Brian understood the look, and whispered something to her. Her face brightened.

"You will go to the seminary next year! Oh, how good God is!"

THE END.

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The Rationale of Confession

How many are the souls in distress, anxiety, or loneliness, whose one need is to find a being to whom they can pour out their feelings unheard by the world? Tell them how they must, they cannot tell them out to those whom they see every hour. They want to tell them and not to tell them; and they want to tell them, yet, be as if they be not told; they wish to tell them to one who is strong enough to bear them, yet not too strong to despise them; they wish to tell them to one who can at once advise and can sympathize with them; they wish to relieve themselves of a load, to gain a solace, to receive the assurance that there is one who thinks of them, and one to whom in thought they can recur, to whom they can betake themselves, if necessary, from time to time, while they are in the world. How many a Protestant's heart would leap at the news of such a benefit, putting aside all distinct ideas of a sacramental ordinance, or of a grant of pardon and the conveyance of grace! If there is a heavenly idea in the Catholic Church, looking at it simply as an idea, surely next after the Blessed Sacrament, Confession is such. And such it is ever found in fact—the very act of kneeling, the low and contrite voice, the sign of the cross hanging, so to say, over the head bowed low, and the words of peace and blessing. Oh, what a soothing charm is there, which this world can neither give nor take away! Oh, what piercing, heart subduing tranquility, provoking tears of joy, is poured almost substantially and physically upon the soul, the oil of gladness, as Scripture calls it, when the penitent at length rises, his God reconciled to him, his sins rolled away for ever! This is Confession as it is in fact.—Cardinal Newman.

Parkman and the Jesuits.

The late Francis Parkman was not by any means an ideal historian. He is almost a mystery that an author who wrote about the Church with such intelligent appreciation in one moment could assail her with so much bitterness in the next. It must be confessed, however, that the author of "The Jesuits in North America" rendered a service which ought to be appreciated by Catholics. Before his time the Jesuit was regarded by Protestants with much the same feeling as that with which the child hears of the "Bogy man." There was much about our missionary which Mr. Parkman himself could not understand, and thus he often unwittingly misrepresented our holy religion. Besides, as he once confessed to Dr. John Gilmary Shea, he had to consider the prejudices of his readers. The sublime devotion of priests like Jogues and Brebeuf, however, was not to be disparaged, and he has written of these heroic martyrs in words that glow on the printed page. Indeed, there are few more beautiful pages of English literature than those in which he has described the hardships and horrors which they braved in carrying the Gospel to the Indian tribes of New France. The charm of Mr. Parkman's style won for him many readers, and the fact that he was a staunch Protestant invested him with a power for dispelling prejudice which no Catholic could be expected to possess. What a pity that he did not exercise that power to the fullest extent!—Ave Maria.

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