

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.

HYPOCRISY.

"Why do you tempt Me, ye hypocrites?" (St. Matt. xxi. 18.)

What was it in the conduct of these Pharisees that made our Lord send them away unanswered and unsatisfied? If we listen to their words, there is nothing in what they said but what was most true and appropriate. They told our Lord that He knew that He was a true speaker, that He taught the way of God in truth, that He cared for no man and did not regard the person of men. Could anything be better said than that? And yet He Who came to be the light of men dismissed these fine talkers still wrapped in darkness and ignorance. What is the reason for this treatment—a treatment so different to that which our Lord generally gave to those who came to Him?

The reason is plain. These words of theirs were only on their lips, not in their hearts; they did not mean what they said nor wish to mean what they said. In fact it was all put on. They came to our Lord to ensnare Him, to get Him into difficulties. In one word, they came to Him as tempters. But He Who not only hears the words of men but sees their hearts detected their dishonesty and insincerity, and measured out to it fitting punishment. The Saviour of mankind left these hypocrites, so far as we are told, unorigined and ununsaved.

And now how does this apply to ourselves? Very closely and practically. Far away the most important thing for all of us is that we should receive from God the forgiveness of the sins which we have committed. In order to obtain this forgiveness, we have, each one, to go in person to God, as really as these Pharisees went to our Lord, and we have to make to Him certain professions of sorrow and contrition. We have to say that we are heartily sorry for all our sins, we declare that the reason why we are sorry is that those sins have offended Him Who is infinitely good and worthy of all love, or at least that the loss of heaven or the danger of everlasting punishment makes us detest those sins; above all, we have to declare that our mind is made up not to commit mortal sin again, nor willingly to expose ourselves to the dangerous occasions of sin. These are the professions which we have all made to Almighty God over and over again. If they are sincere and genuine, they will, through the Most Precious Blood of our Lord, secure to us the remission of our sins, however many and great those sins may have been.

But the important point is that these professions should be sincere and genuine. How, then, are we to know that they are sincere and genuine? Well, of course, if we know that we don't mean what we say, we don't intend to make any change in our life and conduct, those expressions are plainly hypocritical and will bring down upon us a curse instead of forgiveness. This is so plain that it only needs to be mentioned to see the result. But there are many people who intend to do right and yet make a mistake about the act of contrition. They think that its sincerity and goodness depend on their feelings. They think that they ought to be able, if they are truly sorry, to shed tears for their sins, or at least to have profound emotions.

Now, no one will deny that it would be a good thing to be able to shed sincere tears of sorrow for our sins. The saints have instructed us that we should pray for the grace to be able to do so. But the act of contrition may be and generally is sincere and true if—but mark the condition—we have made up our minds not to sin again, and also to avoid dangerous occasions of sin.

This is the test of a real good act of contrition, and it is a good test, for every one must know his own mind on the point. If we have that full and sincere determination, an act of contrition is good, however dry and cold may be our feelings; but if we have not got that determination, if we have not resolved to avoid bad company; if, on the contrary, we intend going on much as before, then, although we might deluge the confessional with floods of tears, our Lord's words to the Pharisees would be appropriate to us: "Why tempt you Me, ye hypocrites?"

This, then, dear brethren, is a very important application of to-day's Gospel to ourselves; that we must take great care not to approach Almighty God with words which we do not mean, and especially, in coming to confession, that we must come with a real true determination to avoid all grievous sin in the future.

CORPSES OF DRUNKARDS EXHIBITED.

History tells us of the exhibition of drunken men in Sparta to deter the young from the vice of intoxication. We have now an example in our own day and near home more terrifying in its nature.

The local option law was to go into force in Greenwood, Ind., this week. Three men there, considering it to be their last chance for a "speak," bought two gallons of whiskey last Sunday morning and went into the woods to drink it. Two of the men were found dead and the third was found in a dying condition.

Dr. Hall, the Methodist minister, suggested that the children of the town should be shown a specimen of the deadly work of intoxicants. As an object lesson in temperance six hundred children last Monday were marched in regular file past the bloated bodies of the two victims. The names of the men are mentioned in the Associated Press dispatch.

How many there are who have overconfidence in their power while indulging "to take it or let it alone." After a time they find themselves slaves to the habit that makes them outcasts from society, shortens their lives and pushes them downward to drunkards' graves.

If you "can take it now or let it alone," we strongly urge in the name of Him Who says, "No drunkard can enter the kingdom of heaven," that you let it strictly alone now and always.—Cleveland Universal.

A VICTIM OF SPIRITISM.

A WARNING EXAMPLE OF THE RESULTS OF DABBLING IN THE NEW OCCULTISM.

The following letters addressed to Mr. J. Godfrey Raupert by a non-Catholic gentleman, whose name is a familiar and honored one in scientific circles, and is doubtless known to thousands of our readers, affords another warning against the danger of spiritism, and shows the importance of the mission which the Pope has entrusted to Mr. Raupert. His books, "Modern Spiritism" and "The Dangers of Spiritualism," relate many striking instances of the loss of health, physical, and mental, as well as of faith and morals, as a result of practicing the new necromancy. The form of obsession here described is more common than most people have any idea of. Insane asylums now shelter an ever increasing number of patients whose mental derangement, as it is called, may be traced to imprudent excursions into the domain of the occult. That on this point not half the truth has been told, we have the assurance of some of the most eminent experts.

In these circumstances, the dangers incurred by those who dabble in spiritism should no longer be concealed; indeed it becomes an obligation to point them out. They are many and great. The wisdom of the Holy See, in renewing its condemnation of experiments in occultism, is revealed in the unquestionable fact that the inferences drawn from them are antagonistic to Christian faith and piety, though in numerous instances both would seem to be promoted.

The letter which follows is dated September 23, 1908. It will easily be understood why the writer's name cannot be disclosed. His friends are aware that his wife is now in a sanitarium, but only those with whom he is most intimate know why she is there.

A WARNING.
You will, I know, be interested in the case I am about to lay before you. A short time ago if any one had told me that demoniac possession, such as is spoken of in the Scriptures, now existed, I should have laughed at him. I would do so no longer. I have gone through one of the most extraordinary and one of the most fearful calamities that it is possible for one to experience—at least not I, but my wife. Let me tell you the story.

Some time ago she became interested in psychic investigation, and tried automatic writing for herself, with the result that after some patient waiting she developed into a fluent writer. A "spirit" claimed to communicate, and gave a whole life history of himself through the automatic writing. This naturally delighted and interested us immensely.

At first, all the communications came through the planchette board; but later on my wife developed writing with a pencil held in the hand; and no sooner had she done so than she began to experience a pain in the back of the brain—at the top of the spine—which increased in intensity as the days went by until it became well-nigh unbearable. Then sleep was interfered with, and her health became affected.

It was at this stage that the communicating intelligence asserted that he had full command of my wife's body; that he had, in fact, "obsessed" her, and that she was no longer a free agent, but subject to his will. We tried hypnotism and mental cures of various kinds without success. We tried all sorts of physical treatment, going on the supposition that we had ordinary insanity to deal with. We tried electricity, baths, diet, fasting, massage, osteopathy, a change of air at the seashore—all to no benefit. We tried all that doctors could do for her—likewise a failure. She was pronounced perfectly healthy, physically; no organic or even functional disturbance could be found. More and more she passed under the control and influence of the invading intelligence, and less and less concern had she in the affairs of everyday life. We now became seriously alarmed. I tried to expel the demon by will-power and by commanding him to leave; but all such efforts simply made him worse, and his hold apparently stronger.

SPIRITS IN CONTROL.
"And now a new and a terrible feature developed. Hitherto the impulse had been to write—to write all the time and constantly, with a pen, a pencil, with a finger in the air—anything, so long as writing was accomplished. But now voices resounded in her head—two, three, four, voices, talking to one another, and freely conversing together about her. Some of these voices would praise my wife's conduct, others would blame her. Some would swear and curse, and call her vile names—names she had never heard in her normal state—while others would try to defend her from these coarser and grosser ones. The voices told her all kinds of things. At first these things were harmless; but as time went by they told her to do things that were far from harmless—suicidal acts, in fact, which she attempted to accomplish. Once they told her to escape at all costs, and she ran out of the house and down the street in her nightgown. Twice they told her to take her own life, and this she attempted to do. She tried to shoot herself; but, fortunately, only inflicted a wound. In other ways they tried to injure her also, and only the best of care prevented a fearful accident on several occasions.

One curious feature of the case was the fact that my wife realized all the while that these voices were urging her to her own destruction, and yet was unable to resist them. It was as if her own will was entirely in subjection to that of these infernal intelligences. She was quite rational at times, and denied that she was in any way insane; but would argue her case quite rationally, and show you just why it was obsession and not insanity—as, of course, it is universally conceived to be. She is still in this condition, in a private nursing home, as I found impossible to keep her at home.

NOT INSANITY BUT OBSESSION.
"You may think that this is an ordinary case of insanity, and that we have here no definite proof of 'obsession' at all; but I can assure you otherwise. There is a very good proof that the phenomena are objective and not subjective in their origin. My reason for thinking so is this. During the early stages of my wife's illness, as I may call it, I went to three other well-known mediums in town, and got them to diagnose the case for me, without giving them any clue as to the real state of affairs that existed. They could not possibly have known of her case by hearsay, as it was kept very secret. But each of these three mediums agreed that my wife was obsessed, and described in almost identical terms the kind of evil intelligence that was controlling her; and, furthermore, stated certain things that had happened at our home, which in reality had occurred. But better and more conclusive evidence was this: On one occasion the intelligence that claimed to control my wife communicated through another medium, and there asserted that he had done and said certain things at our house. That is, we have here what the Psychological Research Society would call a "cross reference" between these two cases—the same intelligence communicating through both mediums, and stating the same facts through both; also making the claim that he had stated those facts through my wife. Here, then, we have clear evidence of external objective reality—of an intelligence active and separate from the organism through which it is manifesting. Apart from the internal evidence afforded by the case itself, we have this additional proof that real external intelligences are operative in other cases of what is usually classed as ordinary 'insanity,' it will surely revolutionize medical science the treatment of the insane. At the present time, the treatment of such cases is almost entirely physiological, and the utter inadequacy of any such treatment was never more clearly shown than in my wife's own case. No! I am persuaded that we have a real case of obsession here—one similar to many recorded in the Scriptures, and in modern literature, both religious and secular."

those who give them. Let us twine the memories of the departed around our minds and hearts and keep them fresh and green by the dews of God's grace falling gently on them in response to our prayers in their behalf.

3. It is a duty we owe ourselves to pray for the faithful departed. In helping them we shall be helping ourselves. Their release will serve powerfully to save us. Their happiness attained will be the forerunner of our own. They will return our goodness a hundred fold. Our Lord and the whole heavenly court will show their gratitude for the souls we add to the number of the elect by greater grace for ourselves. Our charity will be doubly blessed and the justice we satisfy for others will justify us before God and make us pleasing in His sight. Whilst praying for the dear departed, we will be made fully conscious of our own sad state, which, after all, is in one respect, namely the uncertainty of our end, sadder even than theirs. But we will be the more mindful to prepare for a happy death, if we help those who have died well to enter into their glory. The frequent remembrance of the souls in purgatory will keep us mindful that soon we must be numbered with the dead, and this thought will prepare us to meet our God and Judge, who will reward our charity to them by all the greater charity to us. Let us, then, do all we can for the souls in purgatory, and unite with Holy Church in her never-ceasing prayer: "May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace."

In the spirit of Holy Church let us never tire of praying for the faithful departed. The month of November is especially consecrated to their memory. How many have been called away these last few years. Fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters are missed at the family board, and we have only the recollection of them to comfort us in our loss. But though absent in body, they are still with us in spirit, for their souls commune with ours, and we hear their plaintive voices calling out to us to help them reach their God. Who that loved them in life will forget them in death? Let us give them the help of our prayers, that God's justice be satisfied and that they share with Him the joys and happiness of heaven. Let us always remember them, but remember them especially in their special month, and by our prayers and Masses offered for them, bring them to God. They will remember us at His throne, and gain for us many graces and blessings. "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins."—Seedlings.

THE HOLY SOULS.

We need not enter into the doctrine of purgatory which has always been taught by Holy Church and which is proven by the Scriptures, old and new, and which is so reasonable in itself, despite what opposing sects may say; nor need we enter into any detailed account of what the Fathers have said with regard to it, but merely accept the fact that it is Catholic teaching and give to it our ready belief, and let it inspire the thoughts in mind and heart which are proper to it. What are these thoughts? They are surely thoughts of sympathy for the suffering souls and determination to help them all we can.

1. We assist God when helping to free the souls in purgatory. God loves those souls with an indescribable love. He loved them in life because of their close and, in some cases, almost perfect union with Him, and He loved them in death still more because their salvation was secured. And love goes on with impatient and increasing force, the longer they are separated from Him. If there be one thing more than another that we can do to please God, it must be to shorten their sufferings and liberate the souls in purgatory, for of all His children outside His heavenly home these surely are the most beloved, since they are the nearest, when we consider the uncertainties of salvation for all in life, the nearest and dearest, because with Him, now or later, they will enjoy the delights of paradise. Let us, then, show our love of God by giving Him what we can of our merits to return and bring to Himself souls so precious and dear to Him.

2. We owe it to the suffering souls themselves to help them. It is a charity we owe them because they suffer. It is a charity to relieve them because they are brethren. They are our kinsmen, our parents, relatives and friends, and so justice as well as charity claims for them all the relief we can give. Possibly some of these suffer for faults we caused them to commit, and hence justice of more than an ordinary degree demands that we help release them. Some of these souls when they were in life did much for us. They are our parents, perhaps, who fondly watched over us and provided for our wants; our brothers and sisters, who brightened and sweetened our lives; kind relatives and friends, who gave us a helping hand and whose goodness and friendship we did not adequately requite. We are debtors to all these and can more than repay all by giving them in their need the offering of our prayers and good works. How often we place flowers upon the graves of our loved ones, there to fade and wither before another sun has set, and how senseless these for Catholics, unless accompanied by the prayers of the living.

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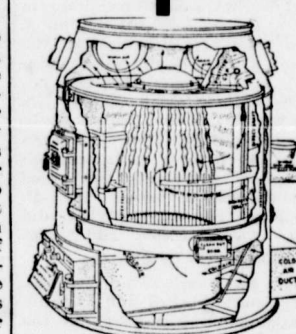
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