

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Palm Sunday

THE WILLING VICTIM.

“My Father, if this cup cannot pass away except I drink it, thy will be done.” (St. Matt. xxvi. 42)

Slowly the solemn hours of Lent have passed away, and we find ourselves once more with our dear Lord at the beginning of His Passion. With Him once again we shall journey to Jerusalem, where we shall see Him delivered by a traitor's hand to the fury of His enemies: we shall see Him in that upper room, ever thoughtful of us, lovingly prepare for us that most precious legator, His Body and Blood to be ever with us, the comfort of our hearts, our “flower of the field,” our “lily among thorns,” who is all fair, in whom is not a spot—our Jesus, our love. We shall witness His agony in the garden, bearing the weight of our sins alone. We shall follow Him before Pilate, and see Him condemned to a shameful death for us, and finally shall tread with Him the blood-stained way of the cross, and with Him ascend “the green hill without the city wall,” and there mingling our tears with those of His Blessed Mother—our mother now, His last dying gift to us—we shall see Him nailed to the accursed tree, and listen to His last cry of agony, as His loving heart breaks beneath the crushing burden of our sins, and redemption's work is done. Heaven's gates are unlocked, and we may enter in.

It is through no fault of His that He suffers thus. No; it is for love of us that He pays the price of sin. What wonder that He stands in dark Gethsemani, and sees the sins of the whole world—our sins, the sins of our fathers, our posterity, sweep down upon Him like a great avalanche—the very face of God Himself obscured by the blackness of that awful cloud of guilt—He shrinks back, for the moment appalled, and cries out from the depths of His tortured soul, “My Father, let this cup pass away from me;” but only for a moment, and then, filled with divine compassion for poor lost humanity, He says, “Thy will be done,” thus setting us the example of complete submission to the will of God.

What is before us ere another Lenten season rolls around we know not, and well for us that it is so. Who among us, were it in his power, would dare stretch forth his hand and draw aside the curtain with which God in His infinite wisdom and mercy has hidden the future from our gaze? Who to him who seeks to know what the next year, the next month, or even the next day has in store for him, until God in His own good time raises the veil. No; rather let us learn from our divine Master's example, and bitter though our cup shall be, accept and drink it to the very dregs in loving submission to His holy will. It may be that poverty, sickness, death, the loss of all we hold most dear, will be our lot; then let us pray as did our suffering Jesus: “My Father, if it be Thy will, let this cup pass from me; but Thy will be done.”

And as we go with our Saviour during the coming week over the rough road of His passion, let us seek to realize as never before the greatness of His sufferings, the extent of His sacrifice. Let us feel that a lifetime of torture suffered by us cannot equal one instant of His agony, and though we may not endure His sufferings—in His love and mercy He does not require this of us—we may follow His blessed example and bleed our wills with that of His father, and that too with cheerful countenances and happy hearts, remembering that though the way be hard on earth, there is an eternity of rest beyond—an eternity spent with Him.

THE FEDERATION AND THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S DAY.

By Right Rev. Regis Canevin, D. D., Bishop of Pittsburgh, Pa.

Man being a creature, and being indebted to God for everything, owes His Creator obedience and worship, and society, which is the union of individual souls, and is, as it were, one public man, ought also to honor God with a certain public and solemn worship. One of the Ten Commandments sets apart one day of the week for this public and necessary worship, and declares to us that that day is to be a day of rest from hard labor and devoted to religious service. Religious worship is a moral obligation, founded on the law of nature. Reason and the unbidden impulses of nature prompt us to offer external worship, which is only the natural outward expression of internal faith, hope and love; and in the Old Law God himself prescribed the nature and time of its performance. “Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day. Six days shalt thou labor and shalt do all thy works; but on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; thou shalt do no work on it, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.”

As nature has appointed certain times for the functions necessary to the life of the body, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, resting, so nature and reason prescribe certain fixed times in which the soul may recover its strength by meditating on eternal truths and contemplating the divine perfections.

The law of the Sabbath seems to have existed before the time of Moses. From the earliest historical records it is evident that all peoples have had certain days consecrated to the worship of the true God, or, among its idolaters, to the heathen divinities which they adore.

The Sabbath was established in memory of the mysterious rest of God after

the six days of creation; to confound those senseless men who would rise up to assert that the world had always existed; to remind us that laborers and even beasts require rest, and that masters should be compassionate and kind to their laborers and dumb animals.

SUBSTITUTION OF SUNDAY FOR THE JEWISH SABBATH.

After the Resurrection of Christ, while the spirit of God's commandment remained the same, the apostles substituted Sunday for the Jewish Sabbath, because on that day came, as it were, a new creation and deliverance, more excellent than the first, in our Blessed Redeemer's triumph over death and sin; and on that day the Holy Ghost came down to abide in the Church, and to confirm it as the teacher of truth and the dispenser of grace until the end of time. The disciples of Christ regarded the day as sacred, called it the Lord's Day, and commanded all the faithful to sanctify it by prayer, praise, thanksgiving, sacrifice, and so forth. Thus, in consecrating the Sunday to God, the Church honors God the Father Almighty as the Creator and Preserver of all things; God the Son made man, as our Saviour; and God the Holy Ghost as our Comforter and Sanctifier.

All kinds of unnecessary servile work are prohibited on Sunday, because it would hinder the religious exercises which God exacts on that day, an observance of which would be prejudicial to the bodily well being of man.

SERVILE WORKS ARE FORBIDDEN. By servile works are meant those which exercise the body more than the mind. Such are mechanical works, trades and manufactures, agricultural pursuits, and heavy manual labor. Those who compel or allow persons subject to them to work are guilty of sin, and often give scandal. The Church also forbids on Sunday law proceedings, public buying and selling, transactions and contracts; all noisy and profane amusements and dissipation, such as meetings for dancing, drinking, or gambling.

The profanation of Sunday, besides being a very great sin, is also a misfortune to the laboring classes. Men can not despise and mock the law of God without bringing his wrath and punishment on themselves and their country. It produces hardness of heart, demoralizes the people, and opens the way to every form of irreligion and vice. It never improves the condition of the poor. Constant idleness wears out the health and strength of the laborer prematurely, deprives him of every opportunity to improve his mind, sinks him to the level of a machine or a brute, makes him the slave of passion and excess, and in the end blots out every vestige of religion from his soul.

Without the rest and moral instruction and spiritual comforts of Sunday, society is threatened and hindered by violent contentions between labor and capital, and men, wronged and oppressed by being obliged to toil seven days for what they should earn in six, resort to secret plots and open riots to break the power of the merciless industrial and economic system which enslaves them. The more Sunday work, the more ignorant, the more temperate, the more violent, the more Godless the Sunday workers become.

The command of God contains two parts. In the one we are commanded to abstain from all unnecessary servile work, as being a hindrance to the proper sanctification of the Lord's Day; in the other part we are commanded to keep it holy by devoting it specially to the worship and service of God, and the good of our own souls.

The strictness of the obligation of abstaining from all unnecessary servile work on Sunday clearly appears from the solemn command of God; from the promises of reward made in the Holy Scriptures to those who obey, and the threats of severe punishments against those who transgress this duty. All unnecessary hard labor is prohibited. “In it thou shalt do no manner of work.” Parents and masters are commanded not to allow their children or servants, or even their cattle to work on the Sabbath. It forbids the stranger who may happen to be with us to do any work on that day. The prophet Jeremias repeats the command in these strong terms: “Thus saith the Lord: Take heed to your souls, and carry no burdens on the Sabbath Day. . . neither do ye any work: sanctify the Sabbath Day as I have commanded you.” (Jer. xvii. 21.) The Church of Christ with the whole weight of her authority forbids the same.

TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS PROMISED THOSE WHO DO NOT PROFANE THE LORD'S DAY.

All kinds of blessings, both temporal and spiritual, plenty of all the necessities of this life, internal happiness and delight of the soul, everlasting honors and rewards, are promised to those who do not profane the Lord's Day. “Keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the Lord. If you walk in my precepts, and keep my commandments and do them, I will give you rain in due season, and the ground shall bring forth its increase, and the trees shall be filled with fruit. . . and you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land without fear.” (Lev. xxvi.) “Blessed is the man that doth this, and the son of man that shall lay hold of this, that keepeth the Sabbath from profaning it, that keepeth his hands from doing evil. . .” (Is. lvi. 2)

Against those who disregard the Sabbath, God himself threatens punishments: “Keep My sabbath, for it is holy unto you: he that shall profane it shall be put to death; he that shall do any work in it, his soul shall perish out of the midst of the people. Six days shall you work, on the seventh day is the Sabbath; the holy rest to the Lord. Every one that shall do any work on this day shall die.” (Ezod. xxxi. 14) It is recorded that the Israelites as a just punishment for his contemptuous disobedience, put to death a man whom they found gathering wood on the Sabbath. It was against the sanctity of the Sabbath that the proud and cruel Antiochus directed his persecution; and when

Nisanor, the furious enemy of the people of God, purposed to desecrate the holy day of the Lord by engaging in battle, he was slain and his great army overthrown by the small force under Judas.

There was a good and wise reason for the Sabbath and its ceremonial strictness under the law of Moses. “I gave them My Sabbaths,” said the Lord by the prophet Ezekiel, “that there might be a sign between me and them, and that they might know that I am Jehovah the Sanctifier.” (Ezek. xx. 12) The heathen of old who worshipped Mamon like the heathen of to-day, lived for the world which his senses could enjoy—for pleasure, for beauty and for possessions. He wished no festivals, he desired no repose except what tired or exhausted nature demanded; because every day and hour taken from the pursuit of earthly things was time thrown away and opportunity lost. But the people of God are taught to live for God and for the spirit; are to leave the plow in the furrow, the harvest standing in the field, the fruit in the orchard, their wares in the market or store, the machinery and tools unused in the factory, and entering into their houses and churches, turn their minds and hearts to God, who says: “Remember thou keep only the Sabbath Day;” and promises them the blessings of the earth and the heavens if they worship and serve Him the true and living God, THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH AND THE COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE.

No stronger appeal can be made for the observance of the Christian Sabbath than the declaration of the Pastoral Letter of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore: “There are many sad facts in the experience of nations, which we may well store up as lessons of practical wisdom. Not the least important of these is the fact that one of the surest marks and measures of the decay of religion in a people is the non observance of the Lord's Day. In traveling through some European countries a Christian heart is pained by the almost unabated rush of toll and traffic on Sunday. First, grasping avarice thought it could not afford to spare the day to God; then, unwise government yielded to the pressure of Mammon, relaxed the laws which for many centuries had guarded the day's sacredness, forgetting that there are certain fundamental principles which ought not to be sacrificed to caprice or greed. Neglect of religion soon passed into mourning, protested, struggled, but was almost powerless to resist the combined forces of popular avarice and Caesar's influence arrayed against religion.

“The consequences of this desecration are as manifest as the desecration itself. The Lord's Day is the poor man's day of rest. Do away with it, and the laboring classes are a seething volcano of social discontent. The Lord's Day is the home day, but it has been turned into a day of labor, and home ties are fast losing their sanctity and their firmness. The Lord's Day is the Church Day, strengthening and consecrating the bond of brotherhood among all believing men. The Lord's Day is God's day, rendering ever nearer and more intimate the union between the creature and his Creator, and thus enabling human life in all its relations.”

FEDERATION SHOULD USE ITS POWER. In this country there are tendencies and influences at work to bring about the desecration of the Sunday and the degradation of the laboring classes. Greed for gain lies at the bottom of the movement. Far be it from us to advocate such Sunday laws as would hinder necessary work, or prohibit such popular enjoyments as are consistent with the sacredness of the day. “To turn the Lord's Day into a day of toil is a blighting curse to a country; to turn it into a day of dissipation is worse.” We earnestly appeal, therefore, to all Catholics without distinction, not only to take no part in any movement tending toward a relaxation of the observance of the Sunday, but to use their influence and power as citizens to resist in the opposite direction.”

The increasing disregard of the Lord's Day is one of the signs of the materialistic spirit and godlessness of our times. Thousands of men, a great number of them Catholics, are employed in iron and steel mills, in mills and factories, on railroads, street cars, docks and wharves, in different departments under city governments and other corporations, on large and small contracts, who have no opportunity, I will not say to rest, but even to worship God for one hour by attending religious worship on Sundays. If they have a day or a half day of rest dur-

ing the week, it is usually on Saturday. Work and pleasure and material progress are made of supreme importance, and the mad sacrifices of every thing for wealth proceeds on Sundays as if the laboring men and women had no Sabbath, no public worship to offer, no bodies to rest, no souls to save. Against this unnecessary labor, this atheistic profanation of the Lord's Day, this paganiating and brutalizing of the laborer and shutting out from his life all spiritual light and grace, the Federation should resolutely use its power in civic, social and private affairs. We must help to educate the workmen to preserve their rights and dignity. We must reach unions, societies, homes and individuals, and educate men to refuse to perform unnecessary labor on Sundays; to keep away from drinking places on Saturday night; to carry their wages home to their families, instead of squandering them for drink on Saturday and Sunday; to avoid the destructive systems of socialism and atheism; to assist at divine services, and in every way to keep the Lord's Day holy.—Federation Bulletin.

Wonderful Days!

These are certainly wonderful days of peace and concord. Catholics are no longer condemned without question. Our esteemed contemporary, the Watchman (Baptist) of Boston, has even got to the point when it can ask editorially, “Are Roman Catholics Christians?” Isn't that kind of a consideration on the part of our esteemed contemporary?—refusing to put us down as idolaters (as the Accession Declaration of the British monarch does) it institutes an inquiry. It asks the question, “Are Roman Catholics Christians?” We might ask in return (if we were not withheld by a sense of common politeness): “Are American Baptists deaf, dumb and blind? Or has the editor of the Watchman ever read a Catholic catechism or a Catholic prayer book? Or has he ever had a Catholic acquaintance in all his life? Or is he competent to tell a Christian when he sees him?—Sacred Heart Review.

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