

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

Rev. F. P. Hickey, O.S.B.
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE SHORTNESS OF LIFE

"A little while" (John xv. 16.)

These words, my dear brethren, were not uttered by our blessed Lord without a purpose. "A little while," what is this that He says—"A little while?" They are so short, so simple, that anyone can remember them. And happy should we be if we had them continually echoing in our souls! They would help us to go on through life, earnest in good, unscathed by evil, for that "little while" is the key to eternity.

How is it that men living in sin can be content and amuse themselves and be quite taken up by this world? Because they forget that it is only for a little while. A little while of self-indulgence, of seeking after pleasure, of gratifying every desire, followed by an eternity of pain. Not a drop of cold water to cool their tongue; not a kind word for all eternity.

A little while of neglecting prayer, of putting God off, of evading every duty demanded by the Church. It is all done so easily, nothing seems to come of it—nothing for a little while; but the end comes all too soon for the careless and the slothful, and then remorse for ever and for ever. What was the good of all that neglect? What came of it? The bitterness of eternally asking that unavailing question! If they had only asked it before it was too late!

A little while of affluence, social success, of being somebody in their own little circle—where is the harm of it? "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." (Mark x. 23.) For where was God during that little while? There was no time for God in business hours; friends, too, had to be entertained—one had to be like others. So in very deed there was no time to give to God at all. No; but an eternity of misery will be exacted by the great God, who was begrudged a thought, a prayer, a Mass in their life on earth.

It is a strange thing, this "little while." It is utterly worthless if we look at past sin. And yet all important is it, for heaven depends upon it. In this life we are only sure of the uncertainty of life; at the best it is only a little while. Good people, devout Catholics, are therefore careful of time. They know their days are few, swiftly speeding on, and the end hidden. Hence the importance of this little while, so short in itself, so long, so eternal, in its consequences.

What is it, then, to labour for a little while? Ask the Saints why they gave up their nights to prayer; why they were so incessant in their labours for souls; how it was they knew no fatigue, knew nothing of being worn out. Their answer is, "There is only a little while for labor, and an eternity for rest. How can we do enough for the good God?"

And instead of being despondent when day after day we are tempted, tripping, beset by sin, we must remember that it is only for a little while. The Master is only seeing if we are worthy of Him. He will not desert us in our struggle, or abandon us when we feel that we can do no more. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God has promised to them that love Him." (Jas. i. 12.)

And obedience for a little while in humility to the will of God; readiness to accept anything He sends for poverty, sickness, trials of all kinds—the world may wonder at it, but it is not true wisdom? In so doing are we not imitating our Blessed Lord? "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names." (Phil. ii. 8, 9.)

What power, then, this text should have over careless sinners, wakening them to see the falseness of their contentment; and over devout souls, too, urging them to renewed endeavours, more patient acceptance of hardships, more determined perseverance.

These words have been the making of many a saint—the world abandoned for a heavenly life, given up for a martyr's crown. "Think of that blessed band, the Forty Martyrs, left to be frozen to death on the ice. Stripped, frost-bitten, perishing, to them how long that winter's night would seem. But they knew it was only a little while, and thinking of eternity, they prayed for perseverance. "We are forty—many forty perseverers! Alas! one turned coward; the little while of perishing was too much for him. The guards relieved him, warmed him, fed him, and in a little while he died! The pity of it! Only a little while longer of courage, and he would have been a saint for ever.

But another stepped into his place. This soldier from the bank had seen a vision of crowns coming down from heaven for the martyrs; but he could only count thirty-nine crowns, and there were forty victims. When the one gave way, he understood about the missing crown. The vision gave him the faith, and stripping himself, crying out that he would be a Christian, he joined them on the ice. And the martyrs' prayer was heard: "Let forty perseverers!" At daybreak, as they were carting the frozen corpses away, one of the martyrs, the youngest, was found to be alive. The guards, hoping to per-

vert him, left him; but his mother, who was watching on the bank, raised him in her arms. To fondle him? No; to cast him in the cart with the others. "Bear up a little while," she said: "Behold, Christ stands at the door, helping thee." And as that heroic mother carried him, he died in her arms. His little while was over.

When we come to die may these words encourage us in that last, sad hour. May pains, partings, fears, all be soothed by the whisper of faith—"only for a little while." St. Paul says: "For patience is necessary for you, that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise. For yet a little, and a very little while, and He that is to come will come, and will not delay." (Heb. x. 36, 37.)

But when the light of heaven dawns upon us, oh! then it will no longer be for a little while. The seed of a little while will have grown into a happy eternity. Is it not true that, if these words were only remembered by us, we should lead earnest and devout lives, and make secure our future happiness? A mystery of the wonderful mercy of God, that prayer, obedience, perseverance in His service for a little while can merit eternal glory.

A LIVING WAGE

I.—WHAT IS REASONABLE COMFORT?

BY REV. JOHN A. RYAN, D. D. (Catholic Press Association)

"A living wage" forms the title of a chapter in Professor William Smart's "Studies in Economics." This chapter was written in Scotland, November, 1893. In its opening sentences we are told: The last few weeks have seen the birth of a new and attractive catchword. Before it has even been defined, it is already put forward as arguing a claim to \* \* \* The expression "living wage" seems to give a reason and a basis for a certain amount of wage. It has, accordingly, found its way into everyday language, and we may expect soon to find that the conception which it expresses has taken its place among the convictions of many.

In all probability these sentences describe the origin of the phrase "living wage." But the idea that it expresses goes back much further than the summer of 1893. Because the idea is so much older than the expression, it has "taken its place among the convictions of many" to a far greater extent and with much greater rapidity than Professor Smart expected when he wrote the words just quoted. Because the expression neatly and concretely sets forth the idea, it likewise has obtained a currency that the professor never anticipated. Both the idea and the expression owe their vogue and their popularity to the fact that they represent a fundamental principle of justice.

IS OLD QUESTION

Although the idea of a living wage goes back at least to the early Middle Ages, it received its first systematic and authoritative expression in the Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII. "On the Condition of Labor." This was published in May, 1891, something more than a year before the "catchword" was first heard in Great Britain. In that document the great Pontiff flatly rejected the prevailing doctrine that wages fixed by free consent were always fair and just. This theory, he said, leaves out of account certain important considerations. It ignores the fundamental fact that the laborer is morally bound to preserve his life, and that his only means of fulfilling this duty is to be found in his wages. Therefore, concluded Pope Leo, "a workman's wages ought to be sufficient to maintain him in reasonable and frugal comfort." This proposition, he declared, is a "dictate of natural justice."

What is "reasonable comfort?" Evidently it is something more than mere subsistence, or that which is aspired because it seemed to bring happiness to others. The reasonable comfort that the Pope had in mind is merely the reasonable minimum. It is that smallest amount which will satisfy right reason. One way of finding out how much is required by this standard is to consult the judgment of competent and fair-minded men. Another and more fundamental method is to interpret reasonable comfort in the light of man's nature and essential needs. These are the ends to which any degree of welfare is but a means. Man's nature and needs, therefore, should indicate the amount of goods that constitute the minimum measure of reasonable comfort.

NOT ALL PHYSICAL WANTS

Like every other human being, the wage earner is a person, not a thing, nor a mere animal. Because he is a person, he has certain needs that are not felt by animals, and his needs and his welfare have a certain sacredness that does not belong to any other species of creatures. A dog or a horse may be used as mere instruments to the welfare of man. They may rightfully be killed when man no longer wants them. Not so with the human person. He has intrinsic worth and dignity. He is made in

the image and likeness of God. He is an end in himself. He was not created for the pleasure, or utility, or aggrandizement of any other human being or group of human beings. His worth and his place in the universe are to be measured with reference to himself, not with reference to other men, or to institutions, or to States. He is worth while for his own sake.

What then are the needs to which are attached this prerogative of intrinsic worth and sacredness? How much of the good things of life must a man have in order that he may live in a manner worthy of a person? In general, he must have sufficient goods and opportunities for the exercise of all his faculties and the development of his personality. On the physical side, this means food, clothing and housing adequate to maintain him in health and working efficiency. If he is underfed, or insufficiently clothed, or improperly housed, he is treated with even less consideration than wise and humane men extended to their beasts of burden. Since the worker is not merely an animal and an instrument of production, but an intellectual and moral person, he requires the means of exercising and developing the faculties of his soul. Therefore, he needs some education, some facilities for reading and study, the means of practicing religion, an environment that will not make unreasonably difficult the leading of a moral life, and sufficient opportunities of social intercourse and recreation to maintain him in efficiency and to give him that degree of contentment that is essential to a healthy outlook on life. As regards the future, the worker requires a certain minimum amount of security against sickness, accident, and old age. Finally, all these goods should be available to the worker, not as a single man, but as the head of a family; for marriage is among the essential needs of the great majority.

MEANS REASONABLE COMFORT All the foregoing goods and opportunities are included in the concept of reasonable comfort. Within the last few years, many groups of persons have attempted to translate these requisites into concrete symbols. They have tried to describe reasonable comfort or a decent livelihood, in terms of food, housing, insurance, etc. Their statements and estimates have shown a remarkable measure of agreement. This substantial uniformity proves that "reasonable comfort" is not only a practical and tangible conception, but one that springs from the deepest intuitions of reason and morality.

We pass over their specific statements concerning the amount and kind of food required as these are too technical for our present purpose. It is sufficient to say that these specifications cover an allowance of food adequate to the preservation of health and working efficiency. As regards clothing, the estimates indicate not merely what is needed for health and efficiency, but those additional articles and changes of raiment which are essential in order that the worker and his family, may, without loss of self respect, attend church, school and participate in public gatherings, and various forms of social intercourse. The provision of apparel for these latter purposes may not be directly necessary on the ground of health, but it meets one of the fundamental needs of a human being. It is among the requirements of the mind and the emotions. To deny it to a man is to treat him as somewhat less than a man.

GOOD HOUSING DEMANDED

In the matter of housing, the authorities agree that the wage earner and his family require at least four or five rooms, with adequate sunlight, ventilation, and all the elementary requisites of sanitation, and in moral and healthful surroundings. The majority of social students believe that the workman's wife should not be compelled to become a wage earner, and that his children should not regularly engage in gainful occupations before the age of sixteen. If these conditions are not realized, the family is not living in reasonable comfort, and its younger members are deprived of reasonable opportunities of education and development.

All the members of the family should have some provision for recreation, such as an occasional trip to the country and visits to moving pictures or concerts; some access to books and periodical literature, in addition to schooling for the children up to the age of sixteen; and of course the means of belonging to a church.

The worker should have sufficient insurance against unemployment, accidents, sickness and old age to provide himself and those normally dependent upon him with all the above mentioned goods during those periods, when he is unable to make such provision by his labor and wages.

CLAIM OF WAGE EARNER

Such are the requisites of reasonable comfort as determined by man's nature and needs, as interpreted by all competent authorities on the subject. That the wage earner, as all other persons, ought to have this much of the good things of life will not be denied by anyone who appreciates the dignity and intrinsic worth of personality. The man who would assert that the worker and his family may reasonably be deprived of these things, must logically contend that the worker may be killed or deprived of his liberty for the benefit of others.

NO MORE KIDNEY TROUBLE

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For the right to life, liberty, marriage and all other fundamental goods rests on precisely the same basis as the claim to reasonable comfort. That basis is the inherent sacredness of personality. This sacredness is outraged not only when the person is killed, crippled, or imprisoned, but also when he is prevented from exercising and developing his faculties to a reasonable degree.

In the next paper, we shall consider the moral principles which are at the basis of the claim to a living wage.

SPIRIT OF THE CHURCH IS LAUDED BY A PROFESSOR

DEAN BROWN OF YALE DIVINITY SCHOOL PRAISES CATHOLIC SOCIETY

"The Roman Catholic Part," was the topic discussed recently in the United Church of New Haven by Dean Charles R. Brown of the Yale School of Religion. Dean Brown considered the spirit, service and organization of the Church and their contributions to the good of the world. In part, he said:

"I have not time to discuss the varied history of the Catholic Church or to consider its many doctrines of which it has more than any other Church in Christendom. I shall not undertake to indicate all of the points at which I would dissent from its position touching civil and spiritual authority, or the work of public education or the rightful attitude toward modernism in philosophy and religion. The purpose of this course is not controversial and I would rather lessen than increase the sense of separation between the various branches of Christ's Church which hinders their sympathetic co-operation touching the great common interests of character and service. "The four main contributions which the Roman Catholic Church has made to the larger faith are in my judgment these: First, its steady inculcation of the habit of worship. All Christian people worship God, but Catholics, we may say not improperly, have the habit beyond all others. The streets in the vicinity of any Catholic church on Sunday morning are thronged with people who are going to Church not because announcement has been made in the newspapers of the presence of some unusually eloquent preacher or some attractive program of music. They are on their way to the house of God to worship. "The little child as soon as he is able to toddle down the aisle and cross himself with holy water and bow before the altar is trained in the habit of worship. Every Catholic church stands open all day and every day in the week inviting any passer-by to come in and worship. When he enters he may find no service in progress, but he will almost always find there groups of people kneeling before their Maker, seeking to unburden and refresh their hearts in personal worship. I question seriously whether this ingrained habit of worship can be matched in any other branch of the Christian Church. "In the second place they develop the habit of obedience to authority. Poverty, charity, obedience—these are the three radical vows taken by an army of men and women in the Catholic faith. For the sake of the service they are to render they renounce the sweet joys of family life that freed from all domestic responsibilities they may come and go as the Church may direct; and they pledge a prompt and unquestioning obedience to their spiritual superiors in the work of the Church. "Now I might not choose that for myself—I am frank to say that I would not. But in the face of the recklessness and lawlessness with which modern society has to deal, I am not blind but that I can recognize the immense value of this habit of obedience to authority in rightly directing the lives of millions of people who owe their allegiance to this branch of the Church. When I say my prayers I thank God for the work and influence of the Roman Catholic Church. "In medieval times it held in check the more turbulent elements in human society; it put a wholesome

restraint on the mad ambitions of military tyrants; it infused something of the spirit of mercy into those who would otherwise have been ruthless oppressors of their weaker fellows: And today in great sections of society the same work is being done in modern terms. Spiritual authority holds in check certain evil forces before which less autocratic methods might find themselves helpless. "In three directions at least you may see this principle at work. Over against a raw materialism which is no closer theory but a base mode of life; over against a revolutionary type of social agitation like the I. W. W., which would burn and slay to gain its ends; over against the spirit of an unrestrained self-indulgence, a wild and reckless sort of Bohemianism, which fears neither God nor man, the Catholic Church stands with a bold front lifting up in sermon and in sacrament, in the appointments of its places of worship and in its constant prayers the nobler ideals of the Son of God. "This, the promotion of the spirit of trust in the Unseen. The Catholic Church meets the human soul at the very beginning of its career and by its sacrament of baptism for the new born babe utters its recognition of the spiritual kinship of the child with the whole body of aspiring souls in the Church and with God and Father into trine name the child is there baptized. And through all of its seven sacraments of baptism and confirmation penance and the holy communion, marriage and orders, on to the extreme unction when the soul is finally prepared for its solem and mysterious journey into the next world, the Church is deepening the faith of its people in the unseen side, to right living. It undertakes to meet all the more important crisis in human life, and with spiritual direction and help. "In these days of hustle and bustle when many people believe only in that which they can see with their eyes and handle with their hands, when the things that are seen and temporal so often obscure our vision of the unseen things which are eternal, it is good for this branch of the Church to steadily inculcate by methods which have shown themselves effective an abiding trust in these intangible aids which mean so much in gaining that more abundant life to which we are called. "The fourth contribution would be found in their marvelous readiness for personal self-sacrifice. The fine quality is present in all Christian churches but the Catholic Church can show an unusual amount of it. The splendid church buildings of this denomination have been built in great measure by the many gifts of workmen and servant girls and other people whose means were meagre. They gave and gave generously because they did not shrink from sacrifice. The Catholic Church has its rich families but, be it said to its honor, it has a larger percentage of the poorer people of this country than any other Church we are considering in this series of services. "Take another beautiful manifestation of this spirit, the work of their Sisters of Charity, Sisters of Mercy and the Little Sisters of the Poor. It is the very jewel and crown of a woman's happiness to have and to be loved by her husband and children and to give herself to the ordering of her own home. But here is an army of sweet-faced, pure-hearted women who sacrifice all that for the sake of the service to which they are dedicating their lives. They go about like their Master doing good and they are doing it in many a trying situation and in every land the sun shines on. Whenever I meet two of them on a street, I feel like the taking off my hat—did I not fear that in the modest simplicity of their lives they would misunderstand my action, I would. "The Catholic Church has been imperial in its ambitions as would befit an organization heading up in Rome. I covet for their larger faith that same spirit of imperialism. Not that I would have the State or the school, the home or the place of trade ruled by the Church, but I would that all these interests were brought into obedience to the spirit of Him who is at the head of all the churches. In this time of world struggle and world renewal let all the churches set themselves afresh not to the easier task of saving a few souls here and there out of the moral wreck, but to the larger task of the spiritual renewal of man's total life in its social, political and economic relations. The larger measure of religious progress along these broad lines would bring indeed a just and lasting peace.—Providence Visitor.

"TOMORROW" "Tomorrow," he promised his conscience, "Tomorrow I'll think as I ought to; Tomorrow I'll do as I should; Tomorrow I'll conquer, tomorrow—That hold me from Heaven away." But ever his conscience repeated: "One word, and one only," "to day."

Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow. Thus day after day it went on: Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow—Till youth like a vision was gone; Till age and his passions had written The message of fate on his brow, And forth from the shadow came Death, With the pitiless syllable, "Now."

Man's conscience is the grace of God.—Byron.

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