

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

THE REV. F. P. HICKEY, O. S. B.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

NEGLECT OF WARNINGS
(James 1:22)

These words should strike everybody: "Not becoming a forgetful hearer." For let us compare what we have heard, and what we have remembered to do. God's calls and warnings from our earliest years have been unceasingly sounding in our ears. Some have struck us more forcibly, and we have paid attention to them for a time; others, and alas! so many, have fallen on unheeding ears. For instance, is it not common after listening to a sermon for us to say, "Oh, we know all that!" Yes, but have we carried it out? Nay, rather, have we not become habitually "forgetful hearers?"

It is from conscience that we hear most frequently and most unmistakably. We wince under the lash of a rebuke; we are ashamed at the truth of the complaint of that monitor within us. Ah! yes, at the time it may make us miserable, but only for a time, and very soon, perchance, we become forgetful hearers once again.

Do not suppose that this description applies only to bad and very careless people. They have become so callous, that they refuse to obey. They sneer at the idea of fearing conscience, though in sickness or in danger they do fear it, and for a little while are most cowardly. They seldom hear a sermon or read a good book, and have forgotten the wise and holy lessons of their youth-days. They so seldom hear anything that is good, that they may be said to be past the stage of forgetting.

No, it is our own selves, ordinary good Catholics, who have to take heed of this warning. "Not becoming a forgetful hearer." It is a danger and an evil to forget God's calls and warnings, and why do we so often find ourselves guilty of it? It is, first, because we ourselves are weak and fickle, and prone to evil; that we are too selfish to really try to do our best, and are easily dismayed and lose heart at our failures. It is, again, because we are in the world, surrounded by the world, and filled with the spirit of the world. We have not learned to keep ourselves "unspotted from this world." We grow enamoured of the world, of its ease and comforts. We are so taken up with the pleasant things of life. This is the danger. The world is an enemy of God. And at last we are so enthralled and fascinated by this worldliness, that we have no will-power left, even to remember the warnings of the Almighty, let alone to make a strenuous endeavor to be "a doer of the word."

Many will object: I can well believe and own that it is true that we have been forgetful hearers many and many a time, but it was regarding mere matters of carelessness or negligence. If it had been a question of grave moment, of urgent necessity, of positive danger, we should have remembered and promptly obeyed. It is just in this kind of excuse that so many make a dreadful mistake. The word of God in the Scriptures and experience itself teach the very opposite.

Yes, self can be so taken up with the pleasures and comfort of life, that there is utter forgetfulness and neglect of endeavoring to save our soul. Conscience is powerless, the grace of God unheeded; yea, if an angel came and took us by the hand to lead us, we should be unwilling to believe his warning, unwilling to obey.

Is that an exaggeration? "Remember Lot's wife," said our Lord, as recorded in St. Luke's gospel (xvii. 32). A brief, emphatic word. Recall the example. Lot, the nephew of the faithful Abraham, "a just man," as St. Peter calls him (2 Pet. ii. 7), chose to live in the country near the Jordan, because the locality was as beautiful "as the paradise of the Lord," says the Scripture (Gen. xiii. 10), though it was near the infamous city of Sodom. He and his wife, however, chose to live there in spite of all. They were "forgetful hearers," for they knew well that they should flee from iniquity and avoid and dread the contamination of the wicked.

And when the Lord decreed to destroy the city of Sodom and the country around, through Abraham's prayers, angels were sent to deliver them. Lot was warned by them and commanded to flee. He knew the anger of the Lord was justified, for his soul had been vexed with the wickedness around him, yet he was loth to go! Life was so pleasant there; the earth so rich and fertile; he had all that man could want. The pleasures of life so enthralled his wife and himself that the fear of the threatened judgment of the Lord could not move him. The angels had to "press him." And as he lingered, they took his hand and the hand of his wife and two daughters, because the Lord spared him. And they brought him forth and said: "Save thy life; look not back lest thou also be consumed." They had to hasten him; he was reluctant and lingered; and much more his wife. She lingered and hesitated, and the angels cry: "Make haste, and be saved; look not back." She could even be deaf to the warning voices of the angels. Love of her home, grief at leaving it, made her

"a forgetful hearer," and, says the Scripture. "His wife, looking behind her, was turned into a statue of salt" (Gen. xix. 19).

Let us not be "forgetful hearers," but be ready and obedient to flee from sin and the evil one, and give ourselves to God. We are all like Lot or Lot's wife! Very nearly lost, but, thank God, not quite; or, alas! very nearly saved, but not quite!

THE ASCENSION

When the forty days of the Risen Saviour's tarrying with his friends had almost elapsed, leaving their nets, but this time for good and for all, the Apostles returned to the Holy City, and on an ever memorable Thursday, towards the end of May, they found themselves with the Master on Mount Olivet, on which he had manifested to them the signs of His second coming, on which he had foretold the destruction of the Temple and of the city, and at the foot of which, under the shadow of the trees of Gethsemane, He had suffered the crucifixion of His soul in expiation of the sins of mankind.

He had finished the work the Father had given Him to do. He had founded His Church, He had ordained His priests, He had appointed His Vicar, and now He was about to return to His Father and to send to them the Paraclete, and the Apostles, seeing the glory of the beatific vision which overflowed His soul and transfigured His body, and themselves aglow with a joy that was the foretaste of Heaven asked Him, "Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" But not for them was the knowledge of the time of the perfect fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies; their mission was to be witnesses unto Him in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth. And when He had given them this, His last mandate, lifting up His hands He blessed them, and while they watched, His sacred Body rose from the earth, and ascended higher and higher, until the cloud of Paradise hid Him from their sight.

Heaven has been nearer to earth since the day of Christ's Ascension. It is easier to lift our eyes to the home that Christ has gone to prepare for us. We know more clearly that our days in the valley of tears are numbered, and that we have not here a lasting city. Whither He has gone we know and the way we know. For, although He has left us, we still have His footprints, and our work is to follow in the path He has made for us, carrying our cross, if needs be, even to the summit of Calvary. But we are not like those who have no hope, for we have His promise, that if we are faithful, at the last, the long last perhaps, like Him, we shall be taken up into Heaven, to be with Him, as sharers in His glory for ever and ever.—America.

MASONS JOIN HANDS WITH SOCIALISTS

EFFECTED APOSTASY AMONG THE WORKING CLASSES—CATHOLICS PLAN TO COMBAT EVIL

By Dr. Frederick Funder

Vienna, March 19.—European Masonry is apparently centering its hopes for political control upon the Socialist party. This situation has been brought about by the fact that in most European countries, the old liberal parties of the bourgeoisie in which free-thinking and "enlightenment" found shelter, have either disappeared or are doomed to political insignificance at present. In addition there has developed a strong tendency toward the Right in all nationalist parties. Events, in Italy, in particular, where Fascism has placed a ban on the lodges, and in Germany and Hungary where Fascist leagues have been established, have filled Masonry with alarm and are impelling it to move back and baggage into the Socialist camp. All Masonic power and energy in Europe today are centered upon the development of Socialism which has become the incarnation of the hatred against the Catholic Church.

MANY LED INTO APOSTASY

In the ostensible programs of the Socialist party in Central Europe the Marxian principle that "Religion is a private matter" is still allowed to stand as a promise that the religious convictions of an individual are not to be intruded upon. In practice, of course, this has been abandoned long ago, but never before has Socialism been so much the scapegoat of atheism as it is now. In Czechoslovakia violent Socialist propaganda led hundreds of thousands into apostasy from that Church and into an undenominational heathenism, while in Austria a storm is now being caused by the efforts of the Socialists to separate the masses of the Socialist workers from the Church.

For several weeks, Socialist propaganda urging the people to abandon the Catholic Church and openly declare their non-adherence to any Church, has been increasing daily. During these few weeks it is estimated that in Vienna alone over 10,000 persons have sold themselves to this modern heathenism. On March 3, in the Tenth District of Vienna 850 persons announced their separation from the Church,

and two days later 430 more made the same declaration. In this district, which is a stronghold of Socialism, there are two Catholic parishes, the congregations being composed largely of workmen and their families. Similar losses are reported from other working class districts.

CHARITY OF CHURCH WIDESPREAD

On the surface there is no reason for this movement away from the Church. The priests live in the same poor conditions as the people. In these times of distress and sickness the Catholic nuns have become the angels of the Austrian hospitals. Bishops are at the head of great relief agencies spending, with the assistance from Catholic countries abroad, many millions of Austrian crowns for the alleviation of distress. Relief centers and charitable institutions have been organized by Catholic relief organizations in all parts of the country. Their Samaritan activities reach the whole population without distinctions of class or political affiliations. The "Daughters of the Divine Love" from their headquarters on the Kaiserstrasse, Vienna, send out truck-loads of gifts every month for the poor and sick. These gifts are made up by members of the organization from supplies sent by the Catholics of Holland. No inquiry is made as to the religious or political affiliations of any applicant for relief. Never were more works of charity being done in Austria by the Catholic Church, and yet hatred for the Church has not disappeared. On the contrary, it seems as though the more brilliantly Bethlehem's star shines out in the darkness of this poor country, the greater is the wrath of the new Herod.

However, while there may be no surface explanations of this movement toward apostasy, the underlying causes are easily discernible. The pamphlets urging people to leave the Catholic Church which are distributed chiefly among the unemployed workmen, usually originate with well known Masonic organizations. The speakers who are flinging their calumnies against the Church at Socialist meetings and who are organizing desertions to the ranks of undenominationalism are nearly all either Freemasons or persons intimately connected with Masonic lodges.

The situation merits serious consideration. Many slack and ignorant persons are either indifferent toward the Christian religion or else steeped in prejudices against the Church, its doctrines, its priests and its institutions, because of the unremitting propaganda of the Socialist press. The methods which the clergy have been able to use so far, have not proved sufficient to combat this ignorance and prejudice. Consequently great efforts are not being made to increase the numbers of candidates for the priesthood.

The Austrian "Work of St. Canisius," founded a few years ago, provides funds for the training of priests who are unable to pay for their own training. Just now there are 450 students receiving aid from this organization. Generous contributions are being made by the Catholic people, although great numbers are themselves almost destitute and the middle classes have been completely ruined financially. Thousands of persons, formerly well-to-do, have become old and sick and are in a far worse condition. Notwithstanding all this, however, the Catholic people have retained their willingness to make sacrifices for their religion.

PLANS TO STEM DESERTIONS

To offer successful opposition to the spread of apostasy, it will be necessary to find methods by which the gospel can be carried to those who no longer come to church. A plan is now being discussed which calls for holding a series of popular conferences on religious science outside of the churches, modeled after similar institutions in England and America. It is also planned to extend the apostolate of the laity. All of these questions will be considered at the General Austrian Catholic Meeting which is to be held in Vienna in June. Austrian Catholics are coming to a realization that the efforts being made to save the country by Msgr. Seipel, the Federal Chancellor, will be in vain, unless the moral character of the people, threatened by irreligion and moral corruption, can be rebuilt.

CATHOLICS RETURN CENTRIST PARTY

By Rev. Dr. Wilhelm Baron von Capitaine

Cologne, March 26.—The return to the Center Party of former members who had left it to form the Christian Peoples Party has become so marked during the past few months that the latter party can be regarded as practically a thing of the past. Particularly in the Rhineland and in the district around Aachen la-Chapelle has this drift back to the Center been noticeable. Many prominent members of the Christian Peoples Party have announced publicly that they have no connection with the party of Dr. Dorten of Wiesbaden or Dr. Smeets of Bonn, who have been accused of endorsing the plan to set up an independent Rhenish Republic under the protection of France.

Originally many Catholics left the Center party when, just after the Revolution they thought that

the Center was allying itself too closely with the Socialists. There was also a fear that some Centrist leaders favored a Monarchist restoration. Formation of the Christian Peoples Party was the result, but since that time the course of the Center party has been such as to restore confidence in its leadership and the need for another party is not now apparent.

3,000,000 LISTED AS CATHOLICS

NEED OF MORE CLERGY FOR FAITHFUL OF INDIA AND CEYLON

The Catholic population of India and Ceylon numbers now more than 3,000,000 souls according to the Catholic Directory of India, Burma and Ceylon for 1923, which features an excellent article by the Rev. J. C. Houpert, S. J., in which he sketches the progress of the church in the last three decades.

Father Houpert contrasts the strength of Catholicity in 1901, 1911 and 1921 and points out that in the last decade the church fared worse than in the three preceding decades, its increase in that time being only 13%. The total number of Catholics given shows 2,201,674 for 1901; 2,023,509 for 1911 and 2,970,163 for 1921. The world-war and epidemics are mentioned as causes militating against the rapid conversion of the Indian people in the last decade and the financial straits to which the country has been reduced is also spoken of as a bar to rapid progress.

The growth of the clergy in the last decade is shown to have been less than that of the lay population, the increase being only 9%. In 1921 there were 3,145 priests in India and Ceylon, as compared with 2,882 in 1911. European priests, it is pointed out, have long ceased to be a majority and now represent about two-fifths of the whole. There are about 1,200 European and other foreign missionaries as compared with 1,830 from India and Ceylon. The European missionaries have shown very little increase during the decade, some orders even losing men. The Indian and Ceylonese priests increased by 15%.

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

Regarding the growth of the church in India during the past forty years and the prospects for the future, Father Houpert says:

"In the decade ending with 1880, the number of Catholics grew by 297,000 and that of priests by 274; whereas in the last decade the respective numbers are 337,000 and 240, and so with other decades; they are much alike.

"The largest growth has been that of 431,000 and took place in the first ten years of this century; but, except for the unexpected inrush of one land and more of aborigines in one part of India, that decade would not hold the first rank, as it does.

"The growth of the Missions obeys certain laws:

"1. At first there is the stimulus of novelty and conquest, the dash of pioneers; but as time goes on, initiative dies out and the reign of humdrum monotony sets in.

"2. Nowadays the extensive policy, which aims at numbers, must make room for the intensive policy, which aims at quality. Left we filled the land with semi-pagans or apostates, the heads of missions had to stop wholesale admissions and to enforce what we may call the law of safety.

"3. There is besides, an automatic brake. You may baptize a fresh crowd every morning; but to make them real Catholics will take years. Unless the clergy increases faster than the faithful, all further apostolate *ipso facto* stops. Missionary progress tends to choke itself.

CLERGY LIST SHOWS SHORTAGE

"And how does it stand with us in India? One point is clear: the clergy has not even kept pace with the people, far from it. In the last sixty years the church has passed from 1,171,000 in 1860, to 2,870,000, an increase of 154 per cent. At this same time the number of clergy should have passed from 1,504 to 3,820. In 1920 it stood at 3,145 only. We face a shortage of 675 priests. Add to this that our numbers include all priests alive, the aged and the infirm, as well as those who will spend their years in schools, colleges and seminaries, or in directing nuns. The mere practice of more frequent confession, which now grows stronger in certain quarters, calls for one priest more where up to now two sufficed.

"It is for us cold comfort to learn from the following figures (1918) that other missions are not much better off:

Mission Fields Baptized and Priests	Catechumens
Africa.....	2,511,000 2,109
China.....	2,423,000 2,344
Japan.....	171,000 271
Indo-China.....	1,257,000 1,483

"Our conviction is that no mission can go ahead that has not at least one priest for every thousand Catholics.

"But had our dark cloud no silver lining? Our dozen great seminaries and scholasticates have now about six hundred candidates. These promise some eighty new priests every year; but even the very low death-rate of 2 per cent. will dispose of sixty others every year. It

will be long before the actual deficit, as shown above, of six or seven hundred priests, shall be covered. The only solution is to double, not the number of vocations that exist already, but the number of those the vocations of whom we foster and facilitate.

"Another suggestion is to fire the laity with the Apostolic spirit. One of them writes: 'In the glorious task of converting India it is meet that the laymen, hitherto neglectful and neglected by an overworked clergy—should assert themselves as also instruments of God in building up the Church. Without an active and cooperating laity the ministry of the priest is handicapped on every side.'

The Directory, published this year for the 73rd time, records the death of Monsignor Tessier, the Bishop of Mysore and the succession of Monsignor Despatures to that see. It also chronicles the consecration of Monsignor Perrichon, as coadjutor of Malacca.

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE TAUGHT THROUGH CORRESPONDENCE

Helena, Mont., April 13.—The use of correspondence courses for instruction in Christian Doctrine is increasing with remarkable rapidity, according to Msgr. Victor Day, Vicar-general of the diocese of Helena. Besides extensive use in the Helena diocese, he says, the First Communion correspondence course is now in use in the following States: Oregon, Nebraska, Illinois, Arkansas, West Virginia, Idaho, Iowa, Oklahoma, California, Wisconsin, Washington, North Dakota, Colorado, Wyoming, New York, Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Alabama, Ohio, South Dakota, Louisiana, Rhode Island, Missouri, Maryland, Minnesota, Texas and the Territory of Alaska.

The courses have also been introduced in British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan in Canada.

SCIENTIFIC POSERS

The danger to Catholic students, said Archbishop McIntyre of Birmingham, addressing the Glasgow Catholic Institute, is not from the real men of science, but from those who pose as men of science, without actually having learned any science.

That being so, said the Archbishop, what the Catholic Church wants is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

He urged on his hearers the need for the study of history, particularly the history of the Church. A faithful study of the history of the past, and particularly of the past of European civilization, said His Grace, will not only make the Catholic proud of belonging to the Catholic Church, but will stimulate him to make himself a more learned and better Catholic.

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