

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUT, D. D.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

SIFTING TRUTH FROM ERROR

"At that time Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is that of Tiberias; and a great multitude followed Him, because they saw the miracles which He did on them that were diseased." (John vi. 1, 2.)

We are a people that love the wonderful and the new. The old, especially in the days we now enjoy, has no charm or attraction for the great majority of men. People use little or no judgment in estimating the worth of something that is novel. They do not search in order to ascertain whether or not it contains the truth, but blindly grasp and cling fast to it. It is certain that many new doctrines and inventions are true ones, but this can not be said of all that human mind and hand put before the world in these days. Time generally tells the doom of the impostor and the charlatan. All discoverers, however, are not deceivers; and all new theories are not deceptions. Errors have lived on for centuries, and there is very little evidence to persuade us that they will not continue to have life. Time has accomplished but little towards their permanent elimination. They generally have been able to continue in their existence, because ignorance has encouraged them. The truth never will shine forth unless the proper way of finding it is followed. He who thinks he knows this way but who is wrong in his belief, whether by his own fault or not, will never know the truth. If every man would realize how defective are his powers of intelligence, and how they do not, as a consequence, comprehend many truths at once, or embrace all together, he gradually would acquire more truth. A humanity ravening for truth, however, as it is so blindly that, with the truth, it swallows much that is false. How few people seem to realize the danger of imbibing error and clinging to it with an almost unbreakable tenacity.

There is much that is truthful which must be manifested in a way that is by no means wonderful. The truth, too, is eternal. Hence, many truths which have existed since time began, first were known in a quiet way, and even now continue without showing any extraordinary or wonderful signs of their existence. They may become, as some say, old-fashioned. Such a statement, however, is not true. It is the mind that has become so modern as to have practically an utter disregard for these truths. Of course, we must accept modern discoveries as they come to light, provided they are truths; and we should rejoice that the human intellect comprehends so much of the powers of nature. But why should we forget the old truths? There is no good reason why we should, yet men have done it and continue to do so. As a consequence many truths—yes, even some that God has revealed—have been brought into doubt, and totally discredited by some. Examples without number could be cited. Men who deny the existence of miracles will endeavor to explain those recorded in the Gospel by saying that Christ knew the secrets of hypnotism, or that He was simply a very expert conjurer. Another example is this: It was found that certain species of animals, plants, etc., under new conditions and with added care, could be perfected to a degree that sometimes would make them almost appear to be new and higher species. Evolution resulted, and then came the denial of the immediate creation of the world by God; and the description of God's work given in the Book of Genesis was looked upon by the upholders of this new system as spurious and even foolish. Many were blinded by these errors and upheld them because they were new, and because they thought that eventually all creation could be explained in a new and satisfactory way in a more natural way. Similar new theories are coming to light every year, and each one seems to gain a certain number of adherents. They will not last, however, for as soon as their newness will have worn away and others excoigitated, they will be thrown upon the scrap-heap of old-fashioned theories.

In the Gospel of this Sunday, we are told that many followed Christ "because they saw the miracles which He performed on them that were diseased." They were people to a great extent like our people of today. Had Christ not performed these miracles, perhaps they never would have followed Him. However, it is not surprising that they did follow our Divine Master, since He performed real miracles and taught undeniable and eternal truths. Who would not have followed Him? There was abiding within Him an irresistible power of attraction to the honest, truth-seeking soul. The words He spoke also were confirmed by His deeds. He was the recognized teacher and leader of the people. He was the promised Messiah. People looked up to Him as the one real expounder of everything truthful; He was the "way, the truth, and the life." Every true follower of His repeated the words of St. Peter spoken on the occasion when our Saviour promised to institute the Eucharist, and when many of His followers were leaving Him because they could not comprehend the truth He was telling them,

"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

These truths that Christ taught are the real truths. Anything contrary to them is an innovation that every one of His followers must instantly reject. These truths are more precious to man than anything else in life. It is to defend them, even at the cost of life itself. Yet many, even Catholics, in days gone by—and at the present time also—have given up these truths of Christ. How sad to think that such frequently has been the case! They who have done so, however, are either groping now in darkness or endeavoring to smother a gnawing conscience. Never has a more good conscientious Catholic left his Church and afterward been free of this remorse.

Let not the fads and fancies in doctrines influence the Catholic. No one ever should be more ready to accept any real new truth—if it be a truth—than he. He knows that it can not conflict with the truth he already possesses, for truths are never irconcilable. Faith and science are two different things, and never cross each other. If a Catholic can not see the errors of certain theories himself, let him go to his pastor who is trained in doctrine and in sciences, and he will be able plainly to point out to the earnest inquirer wherein lies the error. In the words, therefore, of St. Paul: "Stand fast and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or our epistle."—2 Thess. ii. 14.

"VERONICA'S VEIL"

The eighth season of the American Passion Play, "Veronica's Veil," was inaugurated by Gov. Edward I. Edwards of New Jersey, in St. Joseph's Auditorium in West Hoboken. The Governor was introduced by Mayor William G. Heller, who headed the members of the Council of West Hoboken, acting as a reception committee to meet the Governor and Mrs. Edwards on their arrival at the hall. Mr. Heller was first introduced by Father Conrad, the stage director of the play, through whose efforts its success has been, in great measure, attained.

Another distinguished guest for the opening night was Hon. Henry Olitt, representative in congress from this district.

Gov. Edwards, in his address, was highly complimentary to the management of the performance and the members of the cast. "All Europe," he says, "gathers at Oberammergau to see the wonderful drama of the Passion and Crucifixion of the Saviour, and as Oberammergau has come to be to Europe, so this Passion Play has come to be in America, the Lenten expression of Christian faith."

There were two performances today, one in the afternoon, intended for the children, though patronized largely by adults, and the one in the evening for the grown ups. On both occasions the pretty little theatre was filled to capacity.

Because of the arduous nature of the performance, there are two casts, which alternate in the production. The play was inaugurated as the annual Lenten feature of St. Joseph's eight years ago.

THE ANNUNCIATION

The usual quiet of Oriental Spring hung over the little village of Nazareth. An Angel left the Court of Heaven, bearing a message from the Most High God. Straightway he flew to the humble home of Joseph, the carpenter, for it was to his spouse the word of God was sent.

It is probable Mary was in prayer. With frightened eyes and beating heart she gazed at the radiant vision. Her humility made it hard for her to believe. Only when the Angel greeted her with the assurance that God was pleased with her was she able to grasp the significance of the wonderful visit. When the full meaning dawned on Mary that she was asked by Her Heavenly Father to be the Mother of His Incarnate Son, her humility and purity prompted a refusal. The Angel assured her she should sacrifice neither and that it was God's wish. All Heaven trembled on her answer. Gently and sweetly the Virgin spoke the greatest word that ever fell from human lips. The Angelic hosts heard it and a new song of praise and thanksgiving was wafted over the air of Heaven. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy Word." "And the Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us."

The Feasts of Mary are milestones in the life of the Church. The Church of God loves to honor the Mother of God. It is not a mere sentiment, for our love and confidence in Mary is built on our love and confidence in Mary's Son. The close association of the Divine Mother and the Divine Child, the high privilege and exalted dignity of Mother of God, made her worthy of an honor that is supereminently higher than that of all other Saints and Angels together. Since the dawning of Christianity churches, cathedrals and convents have arisen in our Lady's honor. Cities and villages bear her name. Splendid basilicas and stately cathedrals, as well as humble chapels, have proclaimed to all the earth the glory of her whom "all gen-

erations shall call blessed"—"our tainted nature's solitary boast."

In her name and beneath her protecting love orders and congregations of religious men and women have been founded. The Cistercians, her as patroness and queen; the Servites, children of her Dolors, whose order she herself founded; the Dominicans, "Brothers of Mary," whom she shelters under her mantle, who are the custodians of her rose garden; Marista, Sisters of Marie Reparatrice, who herself desired their institution as so many Marias of the Tabernacle; Franciscans, whom she keeps sheltered in her maternal heart.

Mary is the model of saint and penitent, of scholar and laborer, of prince and peasant, of the innocent child and the world-weary man, of the consecrated nun and the "joyful mother of children." She is queen of all that is fairest in God's creation. It is meet that all creation should bring to her feet in one great offering the homage that is due. She is the mother of Fair Love whose love of us is surpassed only by that of God Himself. Who in her would give the visible proof of what His grace can make of the child of dust and ashes. Therefore do we Catholics love her, our Mother, the Blessed Mother of God.—The Tablet.

OUR CHRISTIAN DUTY

Penance, self-denial, and mortification should be the good Catholic's portion for the next forty days. The whole of a Christian's life, says the Council of Trent, should be a ceaseless penance. But Lent is the season of penance par excellence. It is a season set aside by the Church from the rest of the year to remind faithful Christians that now an intensive effort must be made by acts of penance and mortification to atone for the past and to plan for the future.

Mortification is not a popular word, and mortification itself is not a popular practice. But like a surgical operation it is often necessary. Mortification means dying to the flesh that we may live for the spirit.

St. Paul tells us that if we live after the flesh, we shall die, but if die to the flesh we shall live. As the grain of seed planted in the earth must first die before it can bring forth fruit, so the Christian must die to his passions and his lower nature before he can be said to bring forth fruits of Christian perfection.

The cold, rationalistic, and materialistic spirit of the times banishes the idea of God and the supernatural, freezes the soul, and creates an insatiable thirst of pleasure. Such a spirit is infectious. We need to be inoculated to escape its contagion. Mortification is the spiritual serum which we must inject into our systems to be immune against the germs of worldliness.

Mortification teaches men to avoid things that are lawful, in order that they may deny themselves in things that are unlawful. It is like the training that an athlete undergoes to fit himself for a contest. Self-denial is building up our spiritual resistance against our enemy, the flesh. It is not only a cure for bad habits, it is the planter of good habits.

Inventions and refinements of modern civilization have tried to banish pain from the face of the earth. But a wise Providence still decrees that men must suffer. Suffering is an alchemy that purifies the gross of human nature and brings out the pure gold of character. Read the lives of the saints and you will find that all were men and women who suffered, who mortified their flesh and practiced self-denial. Penance is the bedrock of holiness. Christ Himself tells us that those who would come after Him must take up their cross and follow Him.

Many are content to stand with Christ on Mt. Thabor, says the author of the Imitation, who are not willing to follow Him to Calvary. It is easy enough to rejoice with the Church at Christmas, but the test of a good Catholic is how he observes Lent.

We must not forget that although many are not obliged to fast or abstain, all are obliged under pain of sin to practice some penance during Lent. Certain mortifications immediately suggest themselves as practicable for the coming season. We can cut down indulgences. Less drink, less smoking, less candy, less amusements; no theatres, no dances, no movies; more prayers, frequent Communion and more regularity in spiritual exercises;—these sum up the ordinary penances that Catholics are urged to practice during Lent.

Mortification to be meritorious must be against the grain. We are benefited in proportion to the pain our sacrifices cost us. For most people the curbing of their tempers and the observance of charity are infinitely harder penances than bodily mortifications. Regulate your temper during Lent. An unchecked temper spreads ruin around it, and develops with alarming rapidity. Thoughtfulness of others is the great smasher of the idol of selfishness.

Regularity is the secret of advance in spirituality. Regular daily prayers, punctuality at Sunday Mass, weekly confession and Communion, daily Mass, and the daily Rosary and daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament are some of the

pious practices that will fill these coming forty days with grace and holiness, and will lead our souls strengthened and purified to a glorious Easter.

Now is the time for us to do the good that we could if we would. Now is the time to embrace the Cross of Christ, the emblem of penance, in which is our salvation. Happy we shall be if this holy season of Lent will teach us to salute the cross of our life with the same ardent love with which St. Andrew hailed the cross of his martyrdom: "O good cross, that has received loveliness from the limbs of the Lord, long wanted, assiduously loved, unceasingly sought for, and now at length made ready for my thirsting soul, take me from men, and give me to my Master, that through thee, He may receive me, who through thee did redeem me."—The Pilot.

CLUBS FOR STRANGERS

A movement to make it easier for Catholics coming to Chicago from outside towns to become acquainted with other Catholics and to identify themselves with Catholic activities, is gaining city wide momentum in Chicago.

A series of meetings are being held simultaneously by groups in different parts of the city to work out plans especially adapted to that community, with the purpose of eventually coming together in organization that will embrace the entire municipality.

One community on the south side in the vicinity of the University of Chicago at which there are many Catholic students from outside the city and about which large numbers of Catholic working girls and young men live, is setting the pace under the direction of Mrs. Isabelle DeGuzman Carrison.

One suggestion offered by her as a probable means of greater sociability among young people is for a registration of strangers at each church and an evening meeting to be held monthly in some convenient place where ladies of the respective parishes would act as hostesses—introducing people to each other and informing them of various parish activities to which they might affiliate themselves if they so desired.

This plan is based on the thought that the lay people of the parish must carry on this work because most parish priests are already burdened with many tasks.

On the north side of the city Mrs. Margaret M. Hoffman, president of St. Philip's Order of Martha is organizing a movement and a group of Catholic women are doing similar

work on the west side. Church halls, Knights of Columbus Club rooms and meeting places of other Catholic organizations have been generously offered for community

meetings. The name Catholic Good-fellowship Clubs, appears to have the greater popularity although the terms "Welcome Stranger Club" also has a following.

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