

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE NEEDS OF MAN

"Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on." (Matt. 10: 29-31)

There are two needs to be supplied in man: there is the necessary need and there is the need of taste. The necessary need includes many things. Some of these are mentioned in the text—food to keep life, clothing to cover the body. Many of these needs are absolutely necessary, others are essential but not absolutely so. Again, some of these needs were created by God, such as the need for air in order to breathe and live; others are the need for a certain kind of clothing to use in a particular country or when entering into the presence of certain worldly monarchs.

God recognizes these needs existing in man; and, in the Gospel of this Sunday, mention is made of some of them. The intention of Our Lord, in these passages of the Gospel, is to teach us to be more solicitous about the welfare of our soul than the care of our body. Christ says that we must "seek first the kingdom of God and His justice and then all things else will be added unto us." He adduces examples to show that God has an individual interest in us and will provide for our needs. As an argument from less to greater, He reminds us that the birds of the air are able to live without labor, and that the lilies of the field are clothed in all their beauty by Him. If, therefore, God is so solicitous of these irrational and inanimate things, how much more will He, in this respect, care for rational man when he is principally occupied about the salvation of his soul?

God does not make mention of the need which we have termed "of taste," though we may find a distant allusion made to it when He speaks of the beauty in which the lilies of the field are arrayed—a beauty far surpassing that of Solomon decked in the most beautiful of his robes. We reasonably may say that taste is a creation of man, like most of man's creations, has become exaggerated. The Gospel of today seems to offer an open condemnation of this need "of taste" as it exists around us at the present time. Real needs God does not condemn; nay, in His providence He provides for them, or helps us to obtain them. But artificial needs—needs that are not ours by nature—He offers no assurance that He will aid us to satisfy. In fact, when these needs are not in conformity with true Christian ideals, they virtually constitute sin.

Now, we are wont to lament the fact that there is so much misery among men; that there is so much dishonesty; that there is so much pretense. It would appear that much of the evil is due to the fact that people are endeavoring to satisfy a need that is not necessary. There are numerous examples around us. How many Catholics behind prison bars are there today because they tried to live up to a standard they imagined, not in rightness but in material things! In other words, they were living beyond their means. They can not be excused for doing this, for did not this false need lead them to their dishonest acts? But why this need? No lawful reason can be assigned for it. It is a false need created by man, or by a certain society to which he belongs.

But, to come down to more simple things in life: What is ordinary society in this country demanding of people today? Are its requirements such as they always can satisfy justly and honestly? Far from it. We need only mention a few. Every season or every half season will bring its new styles. It is practically a necessity that people conform to them. If they fail, we know the result. They are like the guests in the Gospel, who came to the wedding feast not robed in festive garments. In like manner society treats those who do not conform to the decrees of fashion. No doubt if many of the modern "palace" would change the "demands" of society, they would do more good for the suffering part of humanity than they accomplish now, by sitting pompously at meetings directed toward charity, or by driving the most costly of automobiles to the doors of the poor, or by having their names appear as great philanthropists in big headlines of the daily papers. New conditions must be created. Of course, many people, especially charity workers, are in good faith and are doing their best. This we must admit, and we admire them for it. But good faith alone will not change things materially, or really better the condition of mankind.

Some may be inclined to think that these conditions have come about naturally; but this can not be true. God created a world abounding in all things necessary to sustain life, and, while He said there always would be poor, He never intended nor had He any intention of saying, that some were to starve. It is man's duty, and we may venture to say that it is the most efficacious and meritorious way of practicing charity, to create such conditions as will lessen the

number of the poor, and will provide for the destitute who still remain. Fortunately, America can offer the world a great example in this respect. It is a fact that within the limits of our great country, practically all who make an effort can be more or less comfortable. But even this struggle for comfort has created many a need, which, if unsatisfied, has caused suffering or, at least, much embarrassment. The Christian may feel sure that his real needs will, with his co-operation, be provided for by God, if he serves Him properly. Needs other than the real ones, however, man has no assurance he will be able to satisfy. If he tries to keep pace with certain elements in the world, he may succeed or he may not. Often, if he so desires, he may try to provide for the needs of his position; but if he finds that he is unable to do so by lawful means, let him make the sacrifice and take a more humble rank. God will exalt him and will bless him more than if he had kept pace with those of his social class. To strive to satisfy every need in life is a great distraction and draws one from God.

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Sunday, Aug. 14.—St. Eusebius, a holy priest who suffered death for the faith under Diocletian and Maximian.

Monday, Aug. 15.—The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven, a holy day of obligation.

Tuesday, Aug. 16.—St. Hyacinth, apostle of Poland and Russia. He introduced the Dominican Order into Poland and made apostolic journeys in Austria, Bohemia, Livonia and on the shores of the Black Sea. Hyacinth was born in 1185 and died in 1257.

Wednesday, Aug. 17.—St. Liberatus, Abbot and six monks of Capsa, who were summoned to Carthage by Huneric, the Arian Vandal king and put to death with great cruelty in the year 483.

Thursday, Aug. 18.—St. Helena, the mother of the emperor Constantine. She was British by birth. She was instrumental in finding the true cross of Christ. Helena died in Rome 328, shortly after the victory of her son over Maxentius.

Friday, Aug. 19.—St. Louis, Bishop, a nephew of St. Louis, King of France and of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. Born at Brignoles in Provence in 1274, he renounced royal honors to enter religion, giving up the crown of Naples. He entered the Friars Minor and was remarkable for his piety and mortification. He was nominated Archbishop of Toulouse in 1296 at the age of twenty-two. He died the year following.

Saturday, Aug. 20.—St. Bernard, a Doctor of the Church and called the "last of the Fathers." He renounced worldly honors and joined the monks at Cîteaux, being followed subsequently all by his brothers and his father. As abbot of Clairvaux, Bernard attracted many followers by his holiness. His eloquence raised two splendid armies for the crusade against the infidels and he is famed for many precious writings. He died in 1153.

THE STATE AND THE INDIVIDUAL

In the first article of this series brief reference was made to two erroneous theories of the end of the State. For the purpose of the present article they may be thus characterized: The one holds that the State is an end in itself and the individual exists for the State; according to the other, the State is little better than a necessary evil, and its control over the individual should be confined within very narrow limits.

That the State is an end in itself, is a proposition which can be logically defended only by those who accept Hegelian Pantheism. A person who believes that all existing things are manifestations of the World-Spirit, and that its highest manifestation is found in the State, can quite logically maintain that the State is the supreme end of all human activity. Those who do not accept this theory of the universe and yet who hold that the State is an end in itself, bow the knee in illogical idolatry of an abstraction. For the State has no concrete existence apart from its component individuals. What really happens when this theory is put into practice is that one section of the community is subordinated to another section. The subordinated section is sometimes a majority and sometimes a minority. In either case, some persons are treated as mere instruments to the welfare of other persons. This is illogical, immoral and indefensible.

Since the State is not an end in itself, it can have no other concrete purpose than the welfare of individuals. Therefore, its ultimate end is individual welfare. Since all persons are intrinsically sacred and have equal worth in the sight of God, they are all of equal importance in the eyes of the State. But individual welfare as such is not the immediate end of the State. As we have already seen, the immediate concern of the State is with the community as a whole, with families, and with social classes. The reason for this is entirely practical.

It is not possible nor desirable that the State should attempt to provide for the welfare of individuals as such. It can consider them only as members of social groups. Therefore, it must as a rule concern itself with the common interests of the members of these three most important groups, the community, the family, and the social class. If it gives due regard to these three kinds of interests, it will promote the welfare of all its individual members to the greatest possible extent.

In the pursuit of its end, the State necessarily restricts the freedom of many groups and many individuals. But individual welfare sets certain limits to this restriction. These limits are indicated by the natural rights of the individual. Such are the right to life, to marriage, to property, and to a reasonable amount of liberty. Hence the State may not put any person to death, except as adequate and deserved punishment for crime. It is conceivable that the welfare of the community might be promoted, at least temporarily, through the legal execution of all the physically and mentally incurable, and of all confirmed criminals; but this would be a grossly immoral invasion of individual rights, and the State must safeguard the rights and welfare of all individuals. As a rule, the State may not deprive any class of sane individuals of the right to marry, even though this be done for the sake of bettering the human stock. The temporary prohibition of marriage to persons who are afflicted with certain communicable diseases stands on a different footing, and may, under well-defined conditions, be justified.

The foregoing statements can be denied only by those who maintain that all rights are conferred by the State. This proposition is equivalent to the assertion that the individual exists for the State. And this means in the concrete that some individuals exist entirely for other individuals. The fact that individual rights come into full exercise only in the State and are adequately enforced only by the State, does not prove that they are derived from the State. They are based upon the nature and the needs of the individual himself. They should be protected and strengthened, not ignored, by the State.

In time of war the State has, indeed, the right to expose the individual citizen to the danger of death, and to other perils of war. But this is no violation of natural rights. It is merely the act of requiring the citizen to perform the obligations incumbent upon him as a member of the State. The citizen has duties to the State, as well as rights which the State is obliged to protect. Among these duties is that of defending the State, even at the risk of life, when the existence of the State is imperiled. And the ultimate end of this obligation is the welfare of human beings.

The main defect in the individualistic theory of the State is that it contemplates individuals in the abstract, rather than as they actually exist. It regards them as all having equal powers and having the same interests. Therefore, State intervention is looked upon as a kind of restriction, or coercion, or interference which affects injuriously all individuals. The State is pictured as a tyrant which oppresses the individual for no justifiable purpose.

Of course, this is a thoroughly false conception. Individuals are not equal, either physically or mentally, and their interests differ enormously. Restrictive regulations may affect one group favorably and another group unfavorably. The weaker groups need the protection of the State against the superior cunning and the superior force of the stronger groups. As a rule, the stronger groups whose oppressive actions stand in need of restraint by the State are minorities. When the advocates of the individualistic theory demand that the individual be left alone by the State, what they really ask is that some individuals be permitted to oppress other individuals, and that minorities be permitted to oppress majorities. For example, unlimited freedom of contract in commerce and industry deprives great masses of persons of their rights to humane working conditions, to a decent livelihood, and to the opportunity to purchase the necessities and comforts of life at fair prices. Hence the State may, and should, restrict freedom of contract to whatever extent is necessary to enable the weaker individuals to enjoy reasonable opportunities of life and self-development. So long as it does not interfere with natural rights, it may restrict individual freedom whenever this is necessary to promote the common good, and to effect a fair distribution of opportunity among all its component members.

On the other hand, the State should not do anything for the individual which the latter can do as well for himself; for in the long run men achieve greater development through their own actions, than through the benevolent efforts of an external agency. Hence the proposals of Socialism stand condemned. They would discourage individual initiative and energy, and restrict individual liberty to a degree that would be injurious to a great majority of persons. The State serves men best when it

provides them with conditions in which they have a fair amount of opportunity to do things for themselves, to work out their own economic as well as religious salvation. When the State does not fully provide such conditions, it may be obliged as a lesser evil to do some things for large groups of individuals which, under other conditions, these groups could do better for themselves; for example, in the provision of old-age pensions and insurance against sickness and invalidity. Hence the converse of the general principle stated at the beginning of this paragraph is equally true: Whenever the State can, all things considered, do things better for individuals than they can do things for themselves, its intervention is justified.—John A. Ryan, D. D., in America.

VALUE OF TIME

Alas! we shall never know the value of time until it has slipped from us and left us in eternity. Eternity is the only precursor that can rightly teach the science of using time. Dearest Lord! will it leave us then with Thee?—Father Faber.

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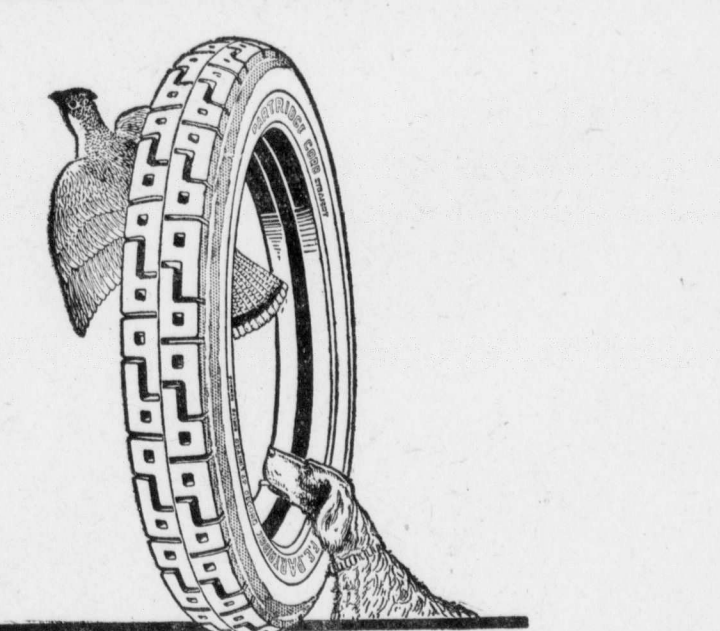
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