

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

REV. F. P. HICKY, O. S. B.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST

SINS OF OMISSION

"The unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness." (Matt. xxv, 30.)

Ordinary good Catholics, my dear brethren, are sometimes tempted to think that they can scarcely be included amongst those who need dread the Judgment Day. Great and notorious sinners, scoffers, and unbelievers, such may well dread the horror and dismay of the Judgment; but they themselves, though by no means Saints, have they any real cause of fear, or is it hysterical emotion or pious exaggeration?

Would that it were an idle fear! The Judgment will be a searching one; things will be brought to light that will dismay many a poor, self-satisfied soul, and the holiest of us in consternation will find how leniently we have regarded many a thing that has angered the good God. Yes, we shall see then that "hardly the just is secure."

And this surprise and consternation will chiefly be caused by one class of sins. Not drunkenness, impurity, wilful neglect of Mass—no, those that do such things are "already judged"; they know and own that if they die unrepentant they will be condemned. "They that do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God." (Gal. v. 21.) No, it is a class of sins we think very little of, have never looked into, and perhaps have no idea of their number or their gravity. I refer to our sins of omission—the things that we might and should have done for God.

You may well inquire, how are such things sins if we have broken no commandment? Are we all bound to be Saints? If I have kept out of mortal sin, how can I be condemned? My dear brethren, has any one of us kept the First and the great Commandment? Our Blessed Lord asked the lawyer: "How readest thou?" And he repeated the Commandment from the law of Moses: "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength." And it goes on: "And these words that I command thee shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising."

Take heed diligently lest thou forget the Lord." (Deut. vi. 5 et seq.) Which of us can claim heaven for having observed all this? Rather should we not be humble and tremble reading those words, "Thy whole heart, whole soul, whole strength, and these words to be in thy heart, meditating on them, Take heed, diligently lest thou forget the Lord!"

How earnest and devout we might have been! How easy-going and careless we have been! What things we might have done for God if we had only taken heed! What things we have neglected, because we have forgotten the Lord! Yet these sins of omission are the very ones that figure so prominently in the Gospel account of the Judgment.

Let us look into the Gospel: they are our Divine Lord's own words, and He meant us to ponder over them, learn their lesson, and be wise in time.

The parable of the Talents (Matt. xxv. 14 et seq.) tells us of the man going into a far country, who called his servants, and delivered to them his goods. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to every one according to his proper ability. The servants who had received the five and the two talents traded with them, and gained other five and two respectively. But he that had received the one talent, going his way, dug into the earth, and hid his lord's money. On the master's return the first two servants were commended and rewarded. But he that had received the one talent came, and said: "Lord, I know that thou art a hard man, and being afraid, I went and hid thy talent in the earth; behold, here thou hast that which is thine." Now what harm had this man done? He was no thief; he had not broken the Seventh Commandment. And yet his lord answering, said to him:

"Wicked and slothful servant, thou oughtest to have committed thy money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received my own with usury. The unprofitable servant cast ye out into exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." My dear brethren, what had that man done but altogether omitted to do good with his grace and his opportunities?

And our Blessed Lord continues: "When the Son of man shall come in His majesty, and the Angels with Him," after blessing the just and bidding them come and possess His kingdom, then He shall say to them also that shall be on His left hand: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels." Is it not a mistake to hear the agonized appeal of those poor souls; they are not adulterers or murderers or drunkards? The Judge simply says:

"For I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat; a stranger, sick and in prison, and you did not visit Me. Then they also shall answer Him, Lord, when did we see Thee thus and did not minister to Thee? Then He shall answer them saying: Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to Me. And these shall go into everlasting punishment."

We see now how we must dread these sins of omission. These are the surprises the devil has in store for the last day. How he must despise and ridicule the self-satisfied, the steady Church-goer with the hard and selfish heart, the habitually and grievously slothful and negligent, who are quite content if they avoid the pitfalls of sins against the express commandments of God.

Our only safeguard is to do all for the love of God, and with a loyalty and earnestness that will refuse nothing that God wishes and demands. We must never be content and think we have done enough. We cannot measure ourselves by what we know of others. We have to be as good and holy as God would have us be. We have to take the grace that is given to us, and trade with it to the best of our ability, lest we be cast out as unprofitable servants.

NEW YORK REGIMENTS
RETAIN RECORDSHEROISM OF NOTED IRISH AND
CATHOLIC NATIONAL GUARD
TROOPS IN FRANCE

The following correspondence by John M'Hugh Stuart of the European staff of the International News Service accounts in detail the heroism of the noted Irish and Catholic national guard regiments of the States of Massachusetts and New York. The article, which appeared in the Chicago American, follows:

Paris, Sept. 13.

"Will the Irish fight?"

The same old answer may be made. They will. It can be made on the records of two famous Irish-American regiments in France. It is a record that makes men of Irish blood hold their heads high. It is a record that betters the brightest page of America's most glorious military annals.

These two regiments, one used to be the old Ninth Massachusetts and the other the Fighting Sixty-ninth of New York, were in every bad scrap the American army has been in. The tales of their prowess are just now filtering back to Paris. They may be told because the censor at headquarters has now ruled that regiments may be named for their part in such fighting as preceded that on the River Vesle.

The Ninth and the Sixty-ninth were in almost all of it. The story does not come from official reports. It comes from the lips of two men, one a doctor in the Ninth and the other a chaplain in the Sixty-ninth, who saw what they relate. These two have seen many soldiers die. They know what bravery and courage and cheerfulness are.

LIEUTENANT TELLS STORY

Lieut. Simon Kelleher of the Ninth was in Paris today. He tells the story of his boys. And most of the time he is either laughing or tears involuntarily creep out the corners of his eyes and drop unashamed down his browned cheeks.

Lieut. Kelleher's stories show that the Irish boys of his regiment, the boys of Boston, South Boston, Roxbury, Cambridge and Charleston, fought with the cool courage that held the fire on Bunker Hill until those Americans of an earlier day "saw the whites of their eyes." They show that these boys—and most of them were mere boys—died face to the front, a grim smile on their lips, fighting doing their soldiers' duty to the last breath of ebbing life. Each heartbeat of the all-too-few left throbbled but to one purpose—to fight.

No man of the Ninth died, says Lieut. Kelleher, without taking toll and more of enemy lives with him. Just now the names of these heroes may not be mentioned. But "Kelly and Burke and Shea" are there, all of them, and many more. Lieut. Kelleher says nothing of his own gallantry.

But his stories show that he, too, served. He was not called on for the supreme sacrifice. But he offered his life a thousand times on first aid dressings expeditions to the farthest outpost and beyond.

KILLS SIX; WOUNDED

"I'd been told there was a wounded man in an advance traverse," he says. "I crawled slowly up to get him. I heard his labored breathing in the lulls of the gun fire. And then I rounded the corner of the trench. There he sat, propped against the wall."

"His breath came in tearing gasps and with each one the blood gushed from his chest: for he had been shot through the lungs. He was a boy I had known all my life."

"They got you bad, Pack," I said as I tried to help him.

"They sure did, Sime," he replied. "But looks there."

"I followed the wave of the empty pistol he still held in his hand, and there stretched across the opposite parapet were six dead Germans, one for every shot in his gun. They had got him only when the gun had emptied. I stopped the bleeding as best I could and we got him back to an ambulance. But he died four hours later. I guess his life was well paid for."

"It was this same sharp raid of the coolies that produced one of the coolest bits of desperate courage I ever saw. One of our boys had been captured by three Germans and he was being led off as they retreated, one on either side of him and one behind. Suddenly one of our shells lit within a few yards of the party."

"The three Germans ducked. I thought at first our boy had. But,

no; he had reached into his hip pocket. He dropped a hand grenade directly at his own feet and those of his captors—and the three Germans were killed."

"I got there quickly afterward to where he lay. He smiled up at me. Yes, he smiled, though his arm and half his side had been blown off."

"My boy," I said, horrified, "why did you do that?"

"Saw me get 'em, did you, Doc?" he answered.

"Yes, but—I didn't know what to say as I tried to dress that frightful wound."

"Well, doctor," he said, gravely, "I'd been to Communion this morning and I guess I was ready to die. But I wasn't ready to go to Germany. They searched me, the three of them, and they took those out of my bag and out of my side pocket."

"But I always carry one tucked into my pants when I go out here, just in case of—well, anything like this. And when those three Germans ducked it came through my mind a lot quicker than I can tell you."

"Three dead Germans and one dead American was a lot more on our side of the score than three live Germans and an American as good as dead in Berlin. So I let her go."

"He tried to raise his head and looked around."

"GOT THEM ALL"

"Never mind, boy, you got them all," I assured him.

"Any—any chance for me, doc?" he said.

"I didn't answer and he knew. His remaining hand crept beneath his blood-soaked tunic, gripped something tight and stayed there. After a moment he spoke again."

"Doc," he said, "you know all the boys around our square. I wish they could know I was gone."

"And, doc," his voice was weaker, "will you—will you tell my mother I had—I had this when—I went."

"Slowly his hand came out; slowly it opened; that boy's hand strangely old and worn with the bloodstains and grime. Slowly it opened and there in the blackened palm glinted a tiny, bright silver crucifix."

He was dead."

It's Chaplain Hanley who tells the story of the Sixty-ninth. They refer to the chaplain as holding the clerical record for mileage in No Man's Land. They can't keep him off patrols. Chaplain Hanley knows the story of most of the casualties of the Sixty-ninth. He substantiates the statement that not a man has been killed or wounded by a German bayonet notwithstanding the regiment has encountered in pitched or open battle three of the five divisions of the Prussian Guard at one time and another of its career. Needless to say, the Prussian Guard division can make no such boast. Father Hanley says the hardest time they have with casualties in the Sixty-ninth is to make them stop fighting when they're hit. He is himself just recovering from a wounded leg.

OFFICERS BAD AS MEN

"The officers are as bad as the men," he declares. "The day I got this wound I was working up with Capt. Hurley's company. They'd been driven back a little by a vicious German barrage and they were on a little ridge. They got orders to hold it, and they did, for four days. When they left it they went ahead."

"Well, I was up there this day and I heard of a wounded man ahead and a little on one side, just over the edge of the hill toward the German lines."

"I told the captain I'd better go to him and he wanted to detail a couple of men to help me. I declined and started off by myself, crawling on my stomach underneath a stream of machine gun bullets that would have clipped me had I raised on my elbow."

"I'd gone perhaps fifty yards when I heard a rustle in the grass behind me, and there were two of Hurley's boys. They said the captain had sent them to carry me back if anything happened. Now listen to the rest of it. I sent them chasing back to their company and crawled ahead."

"Just as I got to this ridge the bullet got me. My wounded man was across an open space and I knew I couldn't get to him. I was afraid if I waited till dark I'd bleed to death, so I put a tourniquet on my leg and started back."

"Now all of this is just preliminary. They got me back to a hospital a day later and I'd hardly got settled in my cot when he should they put down in the cot next to me but Capt. Hurley himself. He was badly smashed up in the leg, too. The leg had been dressed at the dressing station and when they had got him settled they started to take off his clothes. As they pulled at his shirt he let out a howl."

"The shirt was stuck to his chest with blood. He had a wound there that the doctors at the dressing station had never discovered."

"Why, captain," said the doctor, looking puzzled at the casualty tag, "it don't say anything about the chest. When did you get this one?"

"What day is this?" asked the captain.

"Wednesday," said a nurse.

"Now, let's see," said the captain.

"Chaplain, you were up there yesterday. I must have got this on Monday."

"All the time he'd been sending men out to take care of me he'd had that hole in his own chest and the shirt frozen over his big heart with his own blood."

"You're a captain," I said to him. "You're always cautioning the boys to report wounds and get them cared for. You stayed up there two days and you never even told me about it."

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"Honest, chaplain," he replied, "I forgot all about it. You know we had orders to hang onto that dinky hill. And we were awful busy."

PRAY FOR THE DEAD

"Who will remember thee after death, and who will pray for thee?" asks the author of the "Imitation of Christ." If the individuals forget their duty to the dead, the Church does not, and her exhortations at this particular time are persuasive to remind the living to assist by suffrages and good works the suffering souls in Purgatory. Thousands who are dying on the battle fields of Europe, should be included in the intentions of Catholics that to these also, who are being taken off with such startling suddenness, He may grant a place of refreshment, light and peace.

The existence of Purgatory is a leading Catholic dogma. There are texts enough in Holy Scripture to warrant all Christians in believing it to be a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead. If there are sins, as we are told, that shall be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the next, and into heaven nothing defiled can enter, salvation would be a hopeless prospect for most of us now in this vale of tears, were there no Purgatory in existence. Extremes are rare, even among human beings. The great bulk of mankind is made up of men and women, neither illustrious for their sanctity nor notorious for their crimes. Ordinary God-fearing people live and die without very many heroic deeds to their credit, and without very many pronounced vices clamoring for their eternal damnation. They leave the world too good to be sent to hell for all immediately into heaven. It is as reasonable then as it is scriptural to accept the doctrine of an intermediate state, where souls may suffer and atone for venial sins, and satisfy the justice of God for the temporal punishment due to mortal sins.

The ninth article of the Apostles' Creed professes the Communion of Saints. It is a consoling dogma; it tells of a bond of union between the living and the dead; it assures that we may assist one another by our prayers and good works and this assistance is not restricted by the boundaries of time and space, but even to the other side of the grave our help to others may extend, just as the members of a family here on earth may afford one another mutual aid.

When November comes, thoughts of the dead are uppermost in the minds of good Catholics. They who are solicitous for their own salvation, are solicitous also for the salvation of others. They will remember the departed and in this they are doing unto others as they would have others do unto them. God has granted a kind of jurisdiction over Purgatory to the faithful on earth, since He has placed in our power to exercise an influence with His mercy to the profit of those who are gone before. Filial piety, Christian charity, and salutary solicitude for our own salvation all suggest and recommend devotion to the souls in Purgatory. It is in the power of everyone to say at least a De Profundis each evening for the repose of the suffering souls, and it is our trust that in God's good time another generation may do the same for us.—Providence Visitor.

WHY THEY ARE PREJUDICED

Among the chaplains who have been in training at the Camp Zachary Taylor school was a Protestant minister from one of the Southern States, relates a priest-graduate now in active service. The reverend gentleman confessed that up to the time he arrived at the training camp he had never seen a Catholic priest. He had heard much of them, to be sure, nor were all his impressions favorable ones. Yet a few weeks in the company of his "strange" confreres rendered him so attached to them that he acknowledged himself most content, when he had a Catholic chaplain to chat with. It is not hard to reconcile the statement of our minister with the "Southern" parts of the country, that the bigotry there is due in large measure to the ignorance of things Catholic which

generally prevails. The propaganda of enlightenment which is being carried on, especially in Georgia, ought to do much to break down the barrier of prejudice. Familiarity with the Church, her teachings and her representatives, is what is needed most, it would appear to aid in the spread of her benign influence.—Catholic Transcript.

A MOTHER'S SACRIFICE

Why should I moan or murmur at my loss, Or shudder at the sacrifice I make? Did not Christ's mother long foresee the Cross, Yet bravely hid her sorrow for His sake?

Did she not day by day at Nazareth, Thro' the long sweetness of His hidden years, Live in the shadow of His coming death, Yet masked with smiles the pain of unshed tears?

I must pay woman's age old tragedy, The patient mother's immemorial part: To wear life's roses lightly to the eye Nor show the thorns that rankle in the heart.

For this with Christ's sweet mother makes me one: Martyr to love maternal, even as she, To wounds and death I freely give my son That thro' my sorrow earth may happier be.

To honor's task I dedicate my boy When duty calls and freedom is at stake, And make surrender of mine earthly joy For God, for truth and for my country's sake.

—P. J. COLEMAN

CHARITY

If but the world would give to Love The crumbs that from its table fall, 'Twere bounty large enough for all The famishing to feed thereof.

And Love, that still the laurel wins Of sacrifice, would lovelier grow, And round the world a mantle throw To hide its multitude of sins.

—FATHER TARD

CONTRITION

Plead Thou my cause; yet let me hear the pain, Lord, Who hast done so much to ransom me, Now that I know how I have wounded Thee, And crucified Thee, Prince of Life, again.

Yea, let me suffer; Thou wilt not disdain To let me hang beside Thee on the Tree

And taste Thy bitter Cup of Agony, Let it not be that Thou hast died in vain.

Ah, awful Face of Love, bruised by my hand, Turn to me, pierce me with Thine eyes of flame, And give me deeper knowledge of my sin.

So let me grieve; and when I understand How great my guilt, my ruin, and my shame, Open Thy Sacred Heart and let me in!

—ROBERT HUGH BENSON.

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THE ETERNAL MOTHER

Strange things happen even in the prosaic depths of the subway. Once in a while the curtain of conversation draws away and for an instant one looks deep into life itself before the jealous curtain falls again.

He was a private of artillery. His boyish face held lines of weariness and as he slumped down into a corner seat of the car his red corded hat fell off, revealing that his hair was yellow and curly. He did not stoop to pick it up, for he fell asleep almost as soon as he hit the seat.

Few noticed the gray-haired woman who sat opposite, watching him. She was gaunt and shabby. One wondered what she was doing abroad at that early morning hour. She never took her eyes off the sleeping lad. Presently she arose as the train jolted into a station.

As she passed the boy she bent, lifted the battered campaign hat, laid it on his lap and then kissed him softly on his tumbled yellow hair. He did not stir and she almost ran from the car.—New York Tribune.

PAT'S COME-BACK

Pat was serving in the army, and his two companions happened to be an Englishman and a Scotman.

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