

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

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

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST AFTER THE RESURRECTION

"Then He opened their understanding." (Luke xiv. 45)

Let us again to-day, my dear brethren, attend to the important doctrine to which our Lord gave prominence during these days from Easter to the Ascension. The first three points, as we saw last Sunday, were the Scriptures, the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

The next is the Primacy of Peter. Already, our Divine Lord had singled out Peter on several occasions. He had changed his name from Simon to Peter, the rock; for Peter had answered for the rest when Christ had asked: "But whom do you say that I am?" "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God!" You may be sure, that in these days of enlightening and strengthening the Apostles, something more will be said. Yes; you will find it in St. John xxi. 15-17. Three times over "Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?" He saith to him: "Yes, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." He saith to him: "Feed My lambs." Here is Peter's commission to be the shepherd of the flock. That the Apostles and disciples took this as a formal installing Peter as their head is borne out by the position Peter fills in the infant Church hereafter. No Apostle gainsaid his authority: and when he died, it was not St. John or another Apostle that succeeded him—no, the one consecrated for that purpose. And the glorious line of successors has continued ever since. Emperors have risen, have fallen into decay, all traces of them obliterated, but Peter's successors, the Popes of Rome, have, link by link, forged out their wondrous chain of succession.

The next point is when our Blessed Lord commissions the Apostles to preach His doctrine throughout the whole world, to make His Church Catholic. It had not to be the Jewish, the Greek, the Russian, the English Church, but the Catholic, universal Church. "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations." (Matt. xxviii. 19.) "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark xvi. 15.)

The history of the Church nobly proves how it has obeyed its Master. From the days of the Apostles to the very present, there have always been holy men, zealous to carry the good tidings of the Gospel to the heathen and the savage.

And still another word of Christ and its fulfillment by the faithful disciples. Christ made miracles a test of the true Church. He gave them the power, and they manifested it. "And these signs shall follow them that believe in My name: they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark xvi. 17, 18.) The Acts of the Apostles show that these words were immediately verified to the letter. And saint after saint in the early ages were blessed with the same power. It is often said that the days of miracles have gone by. With the need, the power returns. The object of miracles was chiefly to impress unbelievers, and win their reverence and submission. Amongst those who have had opportunities to know and recognise the Church of Christ miracles are very uncommon. There is proof enough without them. But in the sixteenth century the Apostolic powers revived in the person of St. Francis Xavier, the apostle of the Indies. Miracles were needed for those poor benighted peoples. And St. Francis was blessed by God with the gift of tongues; he healed diseases, he raised the dead to life.

The last word that our Lord spoke to His Apostles promised undying life to His Church. "And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.) I, the risen Saviour—I, glorious and immortal, am with you all days. Faith in that word has sustained both the ruler and the children of the Church through all the trials of succeeding ages. Its enemies may seem to prevail. For instance, for three hundred years every Pope won the martyr's crown; and kingdoms have rebelled against the Church of Christ; and fifteen times have the Popes been driven forth or led captive from the city of Rome. But in spite of all, calm and undismayed, the Church has gone on its way—"They going forth preached everywhere." (Mark xvi. 20)—its losses in one region amply compensated by new kingdoms accepting the yoke of Christ; and, thus bringing its peaceful revenge, schisms and heresies have died, and the poor wanderers, that they had led astray, have found their true home once more under Peter and the Popes of Rome.

All this, that we have studied, my dear brethren, last Sunday and to-day, is what was said and done after the Resurrection by the Jesus Christ, Whom all Christians must acknowledge their Lord and their God. In what Church can we find these seven emphatic points still adhered to? No Church can be the Church of Christ, unless it holds these most important doctrines. Who has had the power to do away with anything that Christ has laid down? These doctrines are: holding the Scriptures and explaining them; the Sacrament of Penance; the Real Presence in the

Holy Eucharist; the primacy of Peter; the commission to preach and baptize everywhere; the gift of miracles to confirm the doctrine; the imperishable vitality to exist even to the end of the world.

There is only one Church that claims, and has ever claimed, to hold fast to each and all these truths. If it fails in holding to them, the Almighty will have lost His power, the God of Truth failed in His Word, the Risen Saviour found wanting.

We Catholics alone have all. How can we show our gratitude but by treasuring our holy Faith, living up to it strenuously, and being ready and willing even to die for it?

KAISER'S WAR AIMS DOOMED

CARDINAL IN STRIKING SERMON SAYS GERMANY'S WAR AIMS CANNOT BE REALIZED

"The Marvelous Diffusion of the Primitive Christian Religion," was the subject of a striking sermon delivered by His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons in the Baltimore Cathedral.

"A throng that filled the edifice listened to the Cardinal, who spoke with unusual vigor. When he declared that 'the present world-war is a striking illustration' of the fact that 'schemes conceived in passion and fomented by lawless ambition are doomed,' he attacked with much fire. His Eminence said in part: 'The Transfiguration of Christ is a beautiful type of the Christian Church. Born in weakness and obscurity like her divine Founder, she suddenly emerges from her dark recesses like the sun bursting from a cloud, and in a brief time she shines forth on every hilltop of the Gentile world illuminating the nations of the earth by the splendor of the Gospel as Our Lord diffused His rays on Mount Tabor.'

"Let us transport ourselves in spirit to the dawn of the Christian era and let us stand in imagination on one of Rome's seven hills. We see at our feet that immense city teeming with a population, according to the estimate of Gibbon, of about 3,000,000 inhabitants. We observe that metropolis dotted here and there with idolatrous temples and niches to false gods erected in the corners of the streets. And as an evidence that the highest intellectual attainments do not protect a man from the most degrading superstition and grossest vices those people are given up to every species of idolatry. They worship the sun and moon and stars of heaven. The seas and rivers, the mountains and groves have their tutelary divinities. They worship every striking object in nature. They worship every being except God only, to whom alone divine homage is due. In the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles, 'They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the image and likeness of corruptible man, and of birds and beasts and creeping things, and they worshipped and served the creatures instead of the Creator, who is blessed for evermore.'

WORK OF THE APOSTLES
"Such was the condition of society when Our Lord appeared on the theatre of public life. He calls around Him twelve insignificant men—men without wealth and destitute of human learning, men without the prestige of fame, without political, or social, or family influence, men without any of those elements that are considered at all times essential for the success of any great enterprise. He commands them to effect the most mighty moral revolution that has ever occurred in the history of the world. He commands them to uproot idolatry from the face of the earth and to establish in its stead the worship of the one true and living God.

"What a contrast presents itself to our minds between the peaceful conquests of the Apostles and their successors on the one hand and the bloody victories achieved by the great generals of antiquity on the other, whether we consider the weapons with which they fought, the battles which they won or the duration of their victories. Alexander the Great, who may be considered one of the greatest generals of ancient times, subdued nations by wading through the blood of his fellow-beings. By the sword he conquered and by the sword he kept his subjects in bondage. But scarcely was he consigned to the grave when his empire was dismembered and his subjects shook off the yoke that had been imposed upon them.

"The Apostles conquered kingdoms to their Divine Master, not by force, but by persuasion, not by the material sword, but by 'the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God' not by shedding the blood of others, but by the voluntary shedding of their own blood; not by enslaving the bodies of men, but by rescuing their souls from the slavery of sin.

"And the spiritual republic which they founded exists unto this day, is constantly extending its lines, and is consolidated, not by frowning fortifications and standing armies, but by the divine influence of religious and moral sanctions.

MIGHTIER THAN SWORD

"What does this prove? It proves that the pen and the voice are mightier than the sword. It proves that peace hath her victories no less renowned than war, aye, victories more substantial and more enduring. 'It proves that all schemes conceived in passion and fomented by lawless ambition of which the pres-

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ent world-wide war is a striking illustration, as I dooked like the mountain torrent, to carry ruin before them, and to leave ruin and desolation after them; while the mission of men laboring in the name and under the inspiration of heaven, is destined, like the gentle dew of heaven, to shed silent blessings around them and to bring forth abundant fruit in due season.

"No rational or dispassionate mind can review the history of the infant church without discerning the stamp of divinity impressed upon her brow. When we consider the rapid growth of the Christian religion and the feeble instruments that were employed to produce such results, when we consider the hostility the apostles encountered in the whole course of their ministry, when we contemplate the opposition they met with from the learned and from the populace, for every author of note whose writings have come down to us, such as Tacitus, Suetonius and Pliny, all of whom speak with contempt and derision of the Christian religion; when we consider the hostility of the priests of the pagan superstition and from the established Government itself, for the Roman emperors during nigh a hundred years were the high priests of the existing heathen worship; they were so closely identified with the pagan worship as the Czar of Russia was allied with the Greek Church of today.

"Above all, when we reflect on the sublime and austere moral code which they proclaimed to a people whose religion tolerated and even sanctioned the most dissolute morals, we are forced to admit that Christianity is divine and miraculous in its origin.

ST. PAUL'S KEYNOTE

"Well did St. Paul sound this keynote when he exclaimed: 'The foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He might confound the wise, and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He might confound the strong, and the things that are not that He might bring to naught the things that are: that no flesh should glory in His sight.'

"And, in deed, the wisdom of the God is specially manifested in the adoption of means utterly disproportionate to the end to be attained, so that the world might be convinced that Christianity is the work, not of man, but of God and that all the glory should redound to Him.

"For if Christ had appeared in all the pomp and splendor of a temporal sovereign; if He had associated with Him the power of Caesar; if He had impressed into His service the armies of imperial Rome, the world would justly exclaim: 'There is no miracle here, for Christianity was propagated not by the finger of God, but by the arms of the flesh. Or if our Lord had employed in the service of His religion the poets and orators, the historians and literary men of His age; if He had inspired a Virgil and an Ovid, a Cicero and a Tacitus, to wield their pen and raise their voice in attestation of the new religion, there is no miracle here, for the Christian religion was propagated not by the folly of the cross, but by 'the persuasive words of human wisdom.'

"Or if our Saviour had appeared as the possessor and distributor of immense wealth; if He had lavished bribes and bounties to induce men to embrace His doctrines, then the world would say: 'There is no miracle here, for men were drawn to the

Christian faith not by the pearl of great price, but by the gold which glitters. But when we behold the religion of Christ established by the weapons of weakness, humility and poverty we are forced to exclaim: 'The finger of God is here!'

"Who inspired the primitive Christians with their unquenchable zeal and enthusiasm—an enthusiasm in an unpopular and hated cause? Who raised them to that high plane of moral rectitude; who impressed them with that unclouded faith in the immortality of the soul, and in a future destiny? Who imparted to them the power of working miracles; who gave them that indispensable organization cemented, not by force, but formed by the golden bonds of love?

"Who was it but the Lord of Hosts? It was He who said: 'Go teach all nations, and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.' 'Fear not, I have conquered the world.' It was He who said: 'The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.' It was He who said: 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, that ye may go and bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain.'

"My brethren imitate your forefathers in the faith by your unclouded beliefs in an immortal destiny. Imitate them by the rectitude of your lives and by your zeal for the honor of God and His Church. Imitate them, above all, by working miracles of grace and mercy, by your charity and compassion for the sufferings of your fellow-beings.

"Let us earnestly pray that our brave young soldiers who are now in the trenches, or who are preparing to go there, may be preserved in their faith and morals from the dangers which surround them, that they may heroically fulfill their glorious mission, and that they may soon return triumphant to the bosom of their families and to their beloved Columbia, the mighty brother of us all."

HUMILITY

A child that's smitten sorely weeps,
Flooding with tears the violet deeps
Of darkened eyes; and then—her hand
Into your hand, forgiving, creeps!

A beggar, driven from your door,
Refused your surplus winter store—
He strokes his forehead with weary hand;
"God bless you," saith he, and no more.

A poet singing throughout the land,
They turn and hit his gentle hand
That thrills to gladness the sorrow-stricken—
He saith: "They do not understand!"

A priest with all the tender grace
Of Christ upon his tranquil face,
Says, "Love, and be beloved, my brothers!"
They chase him from the holy place.

A gentle sister, convent-bred,
Is censured; meekly bows her head,
Her heart is smitten, her will is firm—
"Not half the meed of my sin," she said.

A leper scorned within the tomb,
The muffled bell for "Room! more room!"
Shuddering, the healthy pass him by,
"Welcome, O God, Thy will, my doom!"

A teacher reading from his scroll
The Wisdom of the World-soul—
"Thou fool," they laughed, who had deemed him wise,
"Find joy in the drugged and drunken bowl!"

A bruised and bleeding Figure raised
Twixt earth and heaven, beneath its
crazed,
A mob blaspheming—"Forgive them,
Earth shudders; the stars look out amazed.

Low is the gate where His garden lies,
None but the meek with downcast eyes
May enter, but there beginneth the
To tropic splendors of Paradise.
—CANON SHERIDAN

EARNST SEARCH WILL LEAD TO CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. H. C. Hengell in Our Sunday Visitor

The evidence in favor of Christianity has convinced countless thousands of the best and most learned men in history, but it has never convinced a man against his will. Only those who, however learned, are humble in spirit can enjoy the beatitude of seeing God. Unbelief and doubt, twin sisters born of intellectual pride, are fostered by unwillingness to investigate fully and to judge fearlessly the convincing evidence of Christianity.

No mere individuals and no mere groups of individuals, as in Protestantism, can interpret Christianity correctly, completely and authoritatively. Without the official and corporate interpretation of the Church chartered by Christ Himself, Christianity can mean only doubt and uncertainty. As a consequence of this fact, when Protestants superficially and partially examine the evidences of Christianity they become skeptics and infidels. But when, like Newman, they examine these evidences thoroughly and impartially, they find their way back to the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church is the mother of Christian nations and

peoples. She carried them in her lap and nursed them at her breast to a higher life. Nations have come and gone. The Church stood at their cradles and at their graves. New generations of men appeared, new epochs of history came. All passed away while the Church remained. Often her enemies thought to bury her, but she survived them all! The one big theme of world history has been the conflict of unbelief against Christianity, but the Church, as the corporate teacher of Christianity, has demonstrated time and time again that she cannot be destroyed, that she is inviolable, and yet visibly, guided by the hand of God.

St. Joseph's Lily, or the Lily of the annunciation, is said to have been brought to Europe from North Syria, where it is said to have bloomed upon Lebanon, and Mount Hermon. It soon established itself in British gardens, and playing truant occasionally ran wild, rioting in luxuriant bloom in the meadows in the south of England.

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