

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.
Fourth Sunday after Easter.

CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION.
"Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (St. James 1, 22.)

Brethren, I fancy if St. James were addressing the Christians of our day he would be inclined to lay a little more stress upon the hearing of the word; for whatever may be said about the "doers of the word" it cannot be denied that the number of those who hear God's Word with advantage might be increased. Indeed, there are many for whom a High Mass sermon, in view of its rarity, would be a luxury, and for whom even a five-minute sermon is long and wearisome. In addressing you, dear brethren, it seems hardly necessary to dwell long upon the importance of hearing God's holy Word, for we have reason to believe you value it most highly. But there are none of us who know too much; we are born in ignorance, and as long as we live we must feel the need of instructions and exhortations on the great questions of the soul—how to live and how to die well. This the Word of God supplies, for, as St. John Chrysostom says: "What food is to the body, the Word of God is to the soul," and if we neglect to nourish our souls with the food, we shall eventually grow weary and cold in God's service, and die through want of strength.

But the important question is this: how can I hear the Word of God? Oul how many Christians have listened to the Word of God, which He Himself declares to be "words of fire," and have profited nothing, have remained cold and indifferent to warnings of that voice that "breathes where it listeth"—Christians who fancy they are wise enough and experienced enough, and who never think of applying these burning words to themselves.

How can I hear the Word of God with profit to my soul? "With meekness," says St. James, "receive the engrafted Word, which is able to save your soul." Our Lord frequently likens the Word to the seed which the tiller sows in the field. Now, he who sows the seed must first carefully prepare the ground, for the harvest will be in proportion to the care he bestows in the preparation of the ground. The seed is the Word of God; and, dear brethren, your hearts, not your ears, are the ground, and therefore you must prepare your hearts. And how? Just as we must cleanse the ground from all that would prevent the seed from bringing forth good fruit, so must it be with the heart. Is mortal sin there? Turn it out, for it is mortal sin which, like thorns, will choke and destroy the good seed. Receive the Word of God with docility and meekness, with a longing desire to learn from Him through His ministers how to lead a life worthy of our calling. "He who has ears to hear let him hear," says our Lord. Indeed, brethren, we all have ears, and why is it, then, that we do not hear? I will tell you why we do not hear, why the voice of God does not penetrate into our hearts. It is because the soil is not prepared: it is because we come to hear the Word with hearts filled with worldly cares or even evil desires, with deep-rooted attachments to things unlawful, with no intention of learning how to lead better lives. If it were only something new we had to learn, some new doctrine, some new and fanciful creed; but no, it is the same Word that was spoken to the early Christians, only new by its practical application to our hearts.

But now, brethren, mark how St. James would have us not deceive ourselves. It is not enough, he tells us, to come here Sunday after Sunday and listen to the Word of God, but we must be doers of the Word; that is to say, we must carry out practically in our everyday life the lessons and inspirations which have been offered us through the ministry of preaching. For if a man, says he, shall be a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he shall be compared to a man beholding his natural countenance in a glass; for he beheld himself and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of a man he was. Be not like this man, brethren, if you would save your souls. When listening to the Word of God, wherein the wants, the failings, the defects of your soul are mirrored, do not go not your way forgetful of what, through God's grace, has been revealed to you, but with meekness receive the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls, and blessed will you be if you hear the Word of God and keep it.

SCOTCH MINISTER'S WIFE EXPLAINS HER CONVERSION.

I was brought up in an Episcopalian, and when of an age to understand, I joined the High Church party, believing that the English Church had come down from the Apostles and having been taught that the Church of Rome was as much a schismatic Church as any of the dissenting bodies. True, I did wonder and enquire (of a Protestant) the meaning of our Lord's words to St. Peter, when he said: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock will I build My Church," etc., but I was put off for a time by being told that the rock meant our Lord's doctrine. Then of course, I was always brought up to look upon the Catholic Church as something quite outside our own religion, as something dangerous and not to be enquired into; as one that worshipped images, placed the Blessed Virgin on a level with Christ, and altogether taught very false and erroneous doctrines. Such a thing as enquiring of a Catholic what their belief really was never entered my head. Finally I married a Presbyterian minister, and lived in a place where there was not even an Episcopal Church nothing but three small bodies of Presbyterians, all quarrelling with one another. This state of things went on for nearly eight years; but last summer, in the good providence of God, I went on a visit to England, and the very first Sunday, hearing there was to be a grand service in the Roman Catholic Church, I thought perhaps there would be no great harm if I went in the evening after so much Presbyterianism, and especially as there were only very few English Churches in that town. It was a grand service, being the Sunday in

the octave of Corpus Christi; but more than that the sermon was preached by one of the Redemptorist Fathers, the beginning of a course of sermons to Protestants to explain the Catholic Faith. It was a sermon showing how the Catholic Church was that one which came straight down from St. Peter through the Popes to the present day; the English Church having its beginning only with Henry VIII. In fact, the sermon explained instead of explaining away our Lord's words to St. Peter. (Matt. xvi. 18). Coming out of the church the Rev. Father spoke to me, and asked me if I was a Catholic, to which I promptly replied: "Yes, an English Catholic." He then showed me that one could not be English Church and Catholic at the same time; the words were a contradiction of one another, as Catholic meant world-wide. I went to see him next day, firmly convinced I should never become a Catholic but thinking it was only fair to hear both sides. The Rev. Father continued his Mission for a week, and to make a long story short by the end of a month I was admitted into the Catholic Church having discovered that it was that Church the keys of which Christ had given to St. Peter, and through him to all the Popes in succession down to the present day, and the Church of which He said: "He that heareth you heareth Me."

There were terrible difficulties to be faced and I knew it would probably mean either the breaking up of our home life, or the loss of my husband's position. It seemed a cruel thing to him after having married him as a Protestant; and withal I was a moral coward. But, thank God, He gave me strength sufficient for the day, and the reward has been even now as our Lord promised, a hundred fold.

When one sees the true Church, there is only one thing to be done. Christ has left one Church, not many churches, and if we love our Master, we must follow whithersoever He leads us, and we must unite ourselves to His Body, "the fullness of Him who filleth all in all." People do call us idolaters; and let us glory in the name if by that idolatry is meant the adoration and worship of Our Saviour, the Incarnate Son of God. They tell us when He said: "This is My Body." He meant, "This is not do what He will with His own? Can He not turn bread into Flesh, and wine into Blood. Who being God from all eternity became Man, and at His first miracle turned water into wine? He can do as great miracles of grace now in enlightening the darkness of those who know not the truth of the Catholic Faith, and in giving them strength to take up their cross and follow Him, when they feel their conscience bidding them do so. And let me here say a word to any one who are not yet Catholics, and who may chance to read these lines. Do make quite sure, before it is too late, that you are in the Church of Christ left. Do not suppose your conscience telling up in a certain Church that must be the right one. If we were brought up as Jews or Mohammedans, we should naturally think we were right but God has given to each of us our intellect and reason, and we must make use of these gifts, as no one of us can answer for another; for "we must all stand before the Judgment seat of Christ." And above all do go for your information to the Catholic priest, and not to a Protestant, who cannot from the very nature of things, know what our religion really is, and from whom one generally hears anything but the truth about it.

It is with the hope of encouraging and cheering any who are facing perhaps as great as I had to face myself, that I pen these few lines. Since becoming a Catholic, I have met some who have given up everything of this world's goods for the sake of obeying Our Master's voice, and joining His Church, and they count it all well lost for what they have gained: "The Pearl of Great Price." Our Lord in His Holy Catholic Church. The best I can wish for others is that they may be led into the peace and truth of the One true Church, and then they will never cease thanking Our good Lord for His mercy, and they will make their very own the words of the Queen of Sheba, after visiting Solomon and seeing his glory: "I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and behold, the half was not told me."—E. G. in Glasgow Observer.

A SCENE FROM REAL LIFE.

The following is no fancy sketch but a scene from real life. It is the New York Sun's account of an incident in a police court in that city, March 8:

Magistrate Joseph P. Fitch sent Jacob Decker, fifty-eight years old, one of his boyhood school chums, to jail yesterday for two months. He was sitting in the Flushing police court yesterday morning when a bedraggled individual with flowing side whiskers and tattered garments entered unannounced. Court attendants sought to intercept the intruder, but he brushed them aside and standing before the magistrate's desk said:

"Say, Joe, don't you know me? I'm Jake Decker. Remember when we went to school and snow-balled each other. That's a long time ago. You're a Judge now, but luck has always been against me and I want you to send me to jail for thirty days so that I can get straightened out. Wish I could go back to the

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"Don't be offended with me, Joe. I just got out of the hospital, where I made a fight to shake the stuff, but I'm too weak and no match for old John Barleycorn. He threw me without half trying, and here I am shaking as if I had the ague, without friends, food or place to sleep. 'Drunken Jake Decker' is what they call me now; yes, 'Drunken Jake Decker.'"

Don't lecture me or give me any advice or waste any words on me, for you can't feel half as bad about my condition as I do myself. You don't know my degradation and I do. Just send me to jail."

An interval of silence followed. Culprits in the pen leaned forward with eyes fastened on the magistrate and the pitiful delinquent before him. Decker nervously fumbled an old hat he held in his hands while Magistrate Fitch once or twice ventured to speak, but was unable to control his voice.

"Yes, I recognize you now," he finally said. "I shall heed your request and you nothing concerning your condition. You want to go to jail. Don't you think I had better send you away for three months?"

"That's too long, Joe," returned Decker pleadingly. "That too long. Why, spring will be here in another month; and you remember how we went trout fishing early in the spring when the grass was green. Don't make it three months."

"Well," said the magistrate, "I'll make it two months and then the weather will be better and you may have a chance to find employment."

"Thank you, Joe," and Decker took his place with the prisoners in the pen. Decker was born in Flushing and had a fine business when he was a young man. Bad investments and drink wiped out his savings and his wife finally was compelled to leave him. For the last few years he has been gradually getting worse, and he has already served several short terms in jail for drunkenness.

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"A poet," writes Father Russell, "was gazing one day at a beautiful rose tree. 'What a pity,' said he, 'that these roses have thorns!' A man who was passing by said to him: 'Let us rather thank our good God for having allowed these thorns to have roses.' Ah! how ought we also to thank Him for so many joys that He grants to us in spite of our sins, instead of complaining about the slight trouble He sends us!"

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