

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

REV. F. P. HICKEY, O. S. B.
LOW SUNDAY

THE TRACING OF CHRIST AFTER THE RESURRECTION

There was a Divine significance in our Blessed Lord's appearing to the disciples at various times during the forty days after His Resurrection. He had proved to them that He was God by rising from the dead. So His words and actions during these days are clothed with a special significance and power.

What are these important lessons? First, our Lord appealed to Scripture and explained it. St. Luke says (xxiv. 27): "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning Him."

As the Master, so the Church. It appeals to Scripture, and explains the Scripture. The Church can find authority for all its doctrines in the Scripture; but it claims the right of explaining the Scripture to its children.

The Gospels and Epistles were written after the Church was founded, and the New Testament is the more important part of the sacred writings. So it is not the Bible that has made the Church, but the Church that has made the Bible, and cared for it, and had it translated and explained, and handed it down from generation to generation.

And immediately the second great lesson follows: "that penance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name to all nations." (Luke xxiv. 47.) Or, as St. John describes Christ's first appearance to His Apostles, Jesus said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." (John xx. 22, 23.)

The words of Christ, "whose sins you shall forgive," were the words of Almighty God, and through all these centuries they are still heard and revered: they are still the ordinance of the Holy Catholic Church.

Your minds have anticipated my words, and you will have said in your hearts: "Our Blessed Lord would recall and emphasize the power and the love of the Holy Eucharist." Yes, St. Luke tells us (xxiv. 30, 31). And it came to pass, whilst He was at the table with them, He took bread, and blessed and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.

The world cannot shut its eyes to the fact, that the doctrine of the Real Presence has been believed, and the Sacrifice of Mass offered, and Holy Communion received, in every land and in every age. The cathedrals, the churches, the little village spire, speak to all of the home of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The world cannot deny it; and the devil knows

well where the Sacred Presence dwells. Let it not be that we, for whom Christ thus dwells in the Tabernacle, should be foolish and slow of heart. Let us not grow accustomed to holy things and think little of them. If we have our Blessed Lord amongst us, and know it and believe it, what excuse can we find if we do not worship Him, visit Him, and receive Him frequently.

Be grateful, then for the blessing of belonging to God's true Church—in which we have the Scriptures preserved and explained to us; in which we have the Sacrament of Penance to forgive us our sins; in which we have the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist for our adoration, our sacrifice, our food. Let us be grateful for these truths and blessings, and guard them zealously and well.

GENERAL INTENTION FOR APRIL

RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XV.

OUR AFTER-WAR PROBLEMS

The problems that the world will have to face when the present cataclysm is ended gives us food for serious thought; we can see those problems coming, but the sooner they are here the sooner they will be solved. The War will end some time, and peace will come back to the nations; but we all realize that this weary world will not return to its normal life before a few more rude shocks have been felt; the viewpoints of too many of its inhabitants have been twisted out of gear; war in Flanders is not a Roman holiday.

The awful fact of millions of men living like troglodytes, under arms for years, occupied in killing their fellow-men, has created too great an upheaval on this earth of ours for human society to enter quietly or quickly again into the ways of peace.

Each country will have its own problems to solve; but what interests us most are those of our own country, which we will have to face when the time comes for the disorganization of our army. One would like to be able to tell, with some show of authority, how the masses of our own armed men now in Europe are being affected by their years in the trenches. Three or four hundred thousand Canadians are in khaki, and in the field three thousand miles from their homes. They are living a simple, primitive life; others do their thinking for them; they have no thought to take for their bodily needs; they have no bills to pay; others attend to those details. All they have to do is to keep themselves whole and healthy and try to shoot straight. Will not the sense of irresponsibility which this manner of life fosters, coupled with the lack of home ties and home influences, create a great change in those men and in their habits of thought? Will the discipline they are submitting to under military rule make them more amenable to discipline when they return to civil life? Or will the traditional ways of soldiers have penetrated so deeply into their lives that their characters shall have changed? What is the outlook? What does the near future promise for us? These questions are easily put, but they are vital. The solution of our religious and economic problems will undoubtedly depend upon the answer that shall be given them.

To mention first the economic problem: the shake-up given to industry and commerce by the transformation into soldiers of so many thousands of our producers and wage-earners and their departure for the seat of war cannot be remedied in a month or a year. Things have changed radically in Canada during the past three years; a different public spirit reigns; a new atmosphere has been created: fear and doubt and hope have supplanted optimism; we at home are at a stand-still simply waiting for the war to end. What attitude will a couple of hundred thousand soldiers assume towards the economic problem when they return home? Will they quietly consent to settle down on farms in the Northwest and elsewhere? Or will they flock to towns and cities where their producing powers will be limited to their own personal needs? Again, what about the unfortunate wreckage, the crippled, the insane, the blind, etc., who are no longer producers in the economic sense, either for themselves or for others? After the War they will be permanently settled amongst us and will be more or less dependent on the Government for their support. The honor of Canada requires that those brave men shall be made to feel their burdens as lightly as possible, but the economic problem will not be made lighter for that. There are many factors which must be considered in reconstruction times, and it will require all the tact and dexterity statesmen can muster up and all the help loyal citizens can give them, to bring back social and economic conditions, at least approximately, to what they were before.

Readjustment, we fear, is not going to be as easy a task as it may seem. Another problem, the moral and religious one, will probably face us after the War and will also seek a solution. Will our soldiers return to Canada with loftier views about the only thing that matters in this world? Undoubtedly, the imminence of death and the fear of God can work wonders in human hearts,

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and we can only hope that those legions of men, made up of our neighbors and friends and relatives, who have faced the end so often on the battlefield, will come back to us impressed with the true value of life. But we may ask, in all sincerity, does war change men? does it improve their spiritual outlook? has life in the trenches brought men to more definite views about their Creator or made them more practical in their service of Him?

If we are to believe reports that have come from the trenches, religion has not had the effect on soldiers in action that one should be expected. Army chaplains may be considered impartial judges; they are on the ground and know just about the sentiments of men around about them. We have already had occasion to quote a few of their letters, and much of their testimony was not flattering to the religious spirit prevalent in the trenches. Undoubtedly there have been exceptions; a recent authority asserts that in the British forces alone there have been at least fifteen thousand conversions to the Catholic faith since the War began. This means that at least some are taking life seriously. But what a small percentage this is of the millions engaged! It has been the experience of more than one military chaplain that not even the horrors of war avail to put the fear of God in some hearts. A letter from one of them, published a few weeks ago in an English magazine, deplored the utter absence of religion among the officers and men he had to deal with. "Eighty per cent. of them," he writes, "never say a prayer," and after giving other details in the same strain, he adds, "One's heart is reduced to bloodless pulp at this state of things." Let us hope that this chaplain's experience is exceptional, and that conditions are not as bad as they seemed to him.

And yet, notwithstanding the dark side that war undoubtedly has, there are serious minds who see a blessing in the present struggle. War may turn loose the baser passions of men, but it lets them see their own weaknesses which Christianity tries to overcome; war also brings out many noble traits of courage and self-sacrifice. Thousands of examples of these have been given to us in the past three years and prove to us that there is something splendid in human nature after all. May we not add that men who are capable of courage and self-sacrifice on the battlefield are capable of similar virtues in civil life?

Possibly the War has already revealed to thousands of our soldiers potential virtues that they did not think they possessed. This revelation alone would be of immense service to themselves and would help both them and us to solve any religious after-war problems that might turn up. Courage and self-sacrifice placed at the service of religion would gain victories greater than those gained in Flanders. We shall need in Canada after the War both courage and self-sacrifice; the one Church that we know by her past history is remarkable for those two virtues will be the gainer thereby. This may be one of the blessings that God is reserving for us as the outcome of the War.

Meanwhile the least we Catholics can do is to promise our loyal help and our fervent prayers to solve any problems or difficulties that may crop up during the period of reconstruction, and trust that God in His goodness will help us all, soldiers and civilians, to serve Him as He wishes to be served, and with all the powers of our body and soul, for He is the Sovereign Lord of all.

E. J. DEVINE, S. J.

THE SECRET TREATY

Butte, Mont.—That Great Britain and, no doubt, France, entered into a secret treaty with Italy some time ago with the avowed purpose of preventing the Vatican having a say in the negotiations which will end the great War or the status which will prevail following the conflict; that it is probable all the nations of the entente alliance agreed to the same proposal, is the information gathered in an interview with Father John B. De Ville, personal representative of Cardinal Mercier of Belgium, and who is visiting Butte.

Father De Ville says that Catholics of Europe learned this with deep feelings of regret, but while some may think it indicates a widespread prejudice against the faith and the Vatican itself, he believes that it only indicates a desire which existed at the time it was made, to bring Italy into alignment with the other nations of the entente. He thinks that it was made at the solicitation of Italy, that it was made some time ago, possibly before the United States entered the conflict, and that Italy solicited it because of a feeling on the part of the protesting faction of Rome that should the Vatican have a say in the final alignment of boundaries there might arise a question as to the papal status and their status.

Asked if the United States may be a party to this treaty with respect to the Vatican, Father De Ville said he did not think so. He stated his belief that the understanding had been arrived at before the United States entered the War, and that had it been made after the entry of this country he did not believe that America would have been asked to agree to Italy's request, because of the peculiarly European aspect of the question at issue and the disagreeable aspect of the subject. Besides, he did not think America would have agreed to it anyway, for this country had advocated open diplomacy since the outbreak of the War.

Questioned as to the effect of this treaty on the Catholics of France, England and Italy, though the latter has been kept secret for so long, Father De Ville only shook his head as though puzzled. "It seems strange that a secret treaty should have been entered into at a time when there was so much opposition to secret diplomacy," the priest was asked.

Again Father De Ville paused, shaking his head doubtfully. Then he added: "I suppose a certain amount of secrecy with respect to diplomacy is necessary during the period of the War—may always be necessary, in fact."

Father De Ville thinks the War may last a long time yet. He does not think that Germany now hopes to retain Belgium, though the Germans hope to retain some sort of influence on the port of Antwerp. He says that the deportations of Belgians constitutes practical slavery. He says the people of Belgium are very grateful to the Americans for the help this country gave, but that people are still starving in the little kingdom. He speaks English fluently and with hardly an accent.—Intermountain Catholic.

WATCHMAN, WHO GOES THERE? One of the worst enemies of the world at the present hour is the opponent of the Catholic Church. As a result of the great world war, and as a result of the discordant element—especially the Socialistic element—left after the departure of our soldier boys there is noticeable on every side a secret opposition to the Church. Men in high places and low have tried to read a sinister meaning into the actions of Catholic bishops, whilst the Pope himself has been calumniated and his actions misinterpreted. They have tried to blacken the character of our Catholic soldiers, forgetting the while the splendid heroism they have shown and the shining example they are giving of moral probity. Legislation which is frankly anti-Catholic has been enacted in two of our States—the barring of the use of sacramental wine. Only after a long fight were those politicians finally ruled out of court who, acting in their dubious righteousness, insisted upon investigating the cleanest spots on God's earth, which are the convents of our holy and self-sacrificing nuns. In more than one instance men have tried to make of the Church a stepping stone to political power, although they themselves have been the least exemplary professors of the faith. In other days men attacked the Church openly and virulently. Now, for political reasons, they make war upon her covertly, sugaring their shafts with specious excuses and making a great show of fairness and justice.

Just because the Church is a world power, and because her moral influence cannot be left out of count when the War is over and rulers come to agree upon a basis for the conduct of the world in the future, she must prepare herself for many attacks, open and insidious, and for every variety of misrepresentation and misinterpretation.

It is for this reason that it became a religious duty for Catholics during the month of March to pray with great fervor to St. Joseph, who was declared by Pope Pius IX. the special patron of the Church in days when she was suffering bitter treatment at the hands of those who should have been her friends. The holy Pontiff believed that just as St. Joseph had protected Our Lady and the Divine Infant during His early years, he would be able as no other saint to protect the Church of Christ, which is His mystical family. There is no record that any one ever laid unholy hands upon the Christ Child or Our Blessed Lady during the days of St. Joseph's life. He watched and guarded them too sedulously. Men could see at a glance the immense love that he bore them, and in consequence did not venture to say or do anything amiss to his wards lest they incur his anger. And so, we can do no better than to ask the

great Protector of the Universal Church, St. Joseph, the Watchman of Christ, to keep his steady eye ever open to the enemy of the faith. If he sleep not on the watch, then no harm can befall the Church herself or any one of those who are under God responsible for her administration amongst men.—Rosary Magazine.

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