

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

Yesterday we celebrated the Feast of the Birthday of St. John the Baptist, of whom our Lord said that a greater man than he was never born; and we well know what kind of greatness Jesus Christ would make much of—the greatness of holiness. Looking at his life altogether, we see in him a striking example of one wielding great power and acquiring an eternal fame, who set out to do nothing, but rather avoided both. No doubt as he grew up he must have heard something about his miraculous conception, of the angelic prophecy concerning him, and of that wonderful visit the Mother of God made to his own mother before either he or Jesus Christ was born. No doubt he felt himself to be consecrated to God, and set apart in a special manner. It is just his fidelity to all those interior inspirations, which, costing him, as it did, so much self-abnegation, and taking him apparently out of the way of obtaining a great name, really made him great.

He was a notable example of those who gain all by giving up all. Only those who have this character in a marked degree are great in their souls, for virtue is both the source and the glory of nobility. No birth however exalted, no good luck however extraordinary, high honors, great wealth, nor heaps of badges and medals can make up for the lack of it. A mean, envious, selfish, proud, gluttonous, sensual, unforbearing, greedy king or emperor neither is nor can be great, no matter how vast his dominions or countless his subjects.

On the other hand, we Catholics know of, and recognize often, many such that singular taste for and perception of what is pure, beautiful, and true, which they unmistakably possess? And, in times of great trial and sacrifice, what is it that often brings them out above and ahead many others of whom we might be led to expect so much more? I'll tell you: it is the greatness of their holiness, the nobility of their virtue.

It is the greatness of their holiness, the nobility of their virtue, which is the manifestation of what is really great in the sight of God and His angels—their love of truth, their ready self-denial, their high-hearted charity, their loyalty to God and religion, the independence of the world, their sweet endurance of pain and sorrow, their meek, forgiving spirit. Such as these are the souls of the great, whom the world, the flesh, and the devil attack and may wound, but cannot conquer. It sometimes we are tempted, dear brethren, to envy the apparent good fortune, as it is esteemed of those whose greatness is not so founded in virtue, as we may be sure that we are weighing something with a very light and empty weight in the balance, which may be very bulky, sparkling and showy, like a big, bright, sunshiny soap-bubble, but with nothing inside, and of very short continuance.

So you see how true greatness is within the reach of every one, and within quite easy reach, too. One is not obliged to do a great many things, nor labor many years, nor accomplish what makes a long report with large headings in the newspapers. One has only to take care how the work he does is called to do—what with his spirit one does it. Says the "Imitation of Christ": "We are apt to inquire how much a man has done, but with how much virtue he has done it is not so diligent considered. We ask whether he be strong, rich, beautiful, ingenious, a good writer, good singer, or a good workman; but how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout and internal, is what few speak of." Yes, it is not so much the long and splendid record of the work, but the spirit of the working, the pure, unambitious, God-loving intention ruling our labors, that makes men worthy of everlasting memory and meritorious of the renown of a great name, which leaves behind one a memory held in benediction and the history of a life delicious to recall.

CRITICS AND WORKERS

London Tablet

"Rusticus" writes to us as follows from the Green Dragon, Lonsdale: "I have just returned from a meeting held in our parish hall convened to consider certain improvements in the village church. Reading the letters of 'Rouge Dragon' and others, I am tempted to think that some account of our local meeting may be of interest to those who may now be concerned at some of the things which have been said in your columns about the Cathedral."

Opening the proceedings, the Rev. Chairman said: "You will have all of you have seen my appeal published in the columns of a prominent weekly paper. While this appeal has met with an encouraging response from people at a distance, you will nevertheless feel with me that it is upon ourselves that the chief burden of this mission must rest." He then went on to say a few words as to the duty and privilege of providing for the public worship of God, the relief of the poor, and the religious education of the children. There was almost everything to be done in these both money and workers. He was sure that everyone was eager to do his part, but it was of importance that all should work together on a definite plan. It would help him know the kind of assistance they were able to give and would make such suggestions as they thought might be useful.

The Hon. Cullum Byde said that, as the Rev. Chairman had given—just as it seemed to him—the first place to the decorum of public worship, he felt that he would not be out of order in calling attention to the patterns of the green curtain behind Our Lady's statue,

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which was an outrage upon the artistic sense of the congregation. At this point the chairman was summoned to attend an urgent sick-call and Mrs. Twaddleton was voted into the chair.

On rising to continue, Mr. Cullum Byde was interrupted by the Rev. Chairman who expressed a doubt as to whether the curtain was green. Originally it had been blue; but he had not been to church recently owing to the painful impression produced by the voluntary choir.

Mr. Phil. Hellen observed that if they had a mosaic instead of a statue there would be no reason for a curtain at all. The president of the local branch S. V. P., who had studied the iconoclastic heresy, not, he trusted, without profit.

Mr. Jerry disclaimed all knowledge of foreign building materials, but having had a life-long experience of corrugated iron, desired to record his deliberate opinion that it did not lend itself to mosaic work.

A somewhat heated discussion ensued. Miss Twaddleton, the head-mistress of the infants' department, wished to draw attention to the inadequate school accommodation, but was ruled out of order. The president of the congregation, met with a like fate. Several ladies and gentlemen then addressed the meeting at the same time. The chairman appealed to many such that singular taste for and perception of what is pure, beautiful, and true, which they unmistakably possess? And, in times of great trial and sacrifice, what is it that often brings them out above and ahead many others of whom we might be led to expect so much more? I'll tell you: it is the greatness of their holiness, the nobility of their virtue.

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Mr. Little England: "I rise to a point of order. It is disgraceful that our premises should be saddled with Italian tiles."

The Chairman: "Monsignore is a title of French origin."

Mr. Coupler (extending): "So is the Salomean chant. And I say to you, in purpose foreign titles and foreign music upon us is more than disgraceful; it is un-English. (Loud applause.) We were content with Gounod, Mozart and Kallor in the time of the late Bishop Jones."

Mr. England: "Doctor Jones."

Mr. Little: "As a member of the R. C. of Surgeons I protest against any ecclesiastical."

The Chairman: "One moment. It is regrettable that the persons exercising ordinary jurisdiction in this country have not seen fit to settle the question of what they would like to be called. But not that the Hymnbook."

The Chairman's further remarks were rendered inaudible by the uproar provoked by this unfortunate reference. There were some unusually scolding; an unknown person who persisted in shouting remarks disrespectful to Stainer's Sevenfold Amen was ejected by the police. The tumult having subsided,

Mr. Broadbent pleaded for more largeness of view. There was a grave and beautiful hymn called "The Vicar's Song" which, though not written for Catholics, was composed by an Englishman—(applause)—called Sullivan—

Mr. O'Flaherty (interrupting) declared most emphatically that "Sullivan" as applied to an Englishman was a usurped title.

The Chairman: "I think, Mr. O'Flaherty, we are all agreed on that point. I repeat it, and I will go on repeating it in different languages."

The Chairman: "This may now cease."

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A somewhat heated discussion ensued. Miss Twaddleton, the head-mistress of the infants' department, wished to draw attention to the inadequate school accommodation, but was ruled out of order.

The president of the congregation, met with a like fate. Several ladies and gentlemen then addressed the meeting at the same time.

The chairman appealed to many such that singular taste for and perception of what is pure, beautiful, and true, which they unmistakably possess? And, in times of great trial and sacrifice, what is it that often brings them out above and ahead many others of whom we might be led to expect so much more? I'll tell you: it is the greatness of their holiness, the nobility of their virtue.

It is the greatness of their holiness, the nobility of their virtue, which is the manifestation of what is really great in the sight of God and His angels—their love of truth, their ready self-denial, their high-hearted charity, their loyalty to God and religion, the independence of the world, their sweet endurance of pain and sorrow, their meek, forgiving spirit. Such as these are the souls of the great, whom the world, the flesh, and the devil attack and may wound, but cannot conquer. It sometimes we are tempted, dear brethren, to envy the apparent good fortune, as it is esteemed of those whose greatness is not so founded in virtue, as we may be sure that we are weighing something with a very light and empty weight in the balance, which may be very bulky, sparkling and showy, like a big, bright, sunshiny soap-bubble, but with nothing inside, and of very short continuance.

So you see how true greatness is within the reach of every one, and within quite