

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

THE BIRTHDAY OF THE SAVIOUR

"For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David." Luke II, 11.

My dear friends, these words of joy were spoken by the angel of the shepherds near Bethlehem one thousand nine hundred years ago. As they filled the hearts of the Jewish shepherds with joy long ago, so today they fill the hearts of all with gladness, love, thanksgiving and reverence.

Every nation celebrates the anniversary of the most important events in its history. The 22nd of February and the 4th of July will never be forgotten by the American people; for they are kept alive each succeeding year by a proud and grateful nation in honor of the birth of the Saviour of our country and in honor of the birth of independence in America.

To day we celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Him who was the Saviour, not of one particular portion of the earth, but of the whole world. What joy, then, should fill the hearts of all "For this day is born to you a Saviour."

If we cast a glance back, and consider what the world was one thousand nine hundred years ago, before the coming of Christ, at then consider what it has been since among peoples guided by Christian principles, then we will have some idea of our motives for rejoicing to day. When Christ came, the majority of mankind was in slavery, without honor, without freedom, without hope. They were sunk into the lowest depths of immorality and crime. He taught them new doctrines concerning the duties of man to man, of the strong to the weak, of the rich to the poor, of man to woman. He inculcated the mutual duty of love and charity.

He sent those who loved Him to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to ransom the captive and to visit the sick. He laid special stress upon the virtues of purity, meekness, humility, patience, faith and love. These doctrines of Christ were instrumental in securing the abolition of slavery, popular rights, free government, protection of children and the poor, in bringing knowledge within the reach of all and in spreading over the whole world the influence of charity. It is any wonder then that we rejoice to-day and feel that heaven is brought nearer to us? Angels are, no doubt, singing around us at this moment and assisting us to be more fervent in our acts of thanksgiving and praise. For it is a day of universal joy and the angel's message has not been received in vain.

But if it is a day of rejoicing for all, it seems to me to be in a special manner a day of rejoicing for the poor and afflicted. The poor seem to be the special favorites of Christ. He was born in poverty. He, to whom the whole world belonged, was born in a stable, destitute of the comforts of life. His parents were poor, and His first abode on earth were poor, hardworking, mountain shepherds. And afterwards He pointed out as one of the signs that He was the Messiah that "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." And one of the characteristic marks of His Church seems to be that it is the Church of the poor. Is not to-day, then, in a special manner a day of rejoicing for the poor?

When we cast our eyes on that Divine Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying on a little bunch of straw in a stable on that cold December night, can we complain any more of our poor and wretched lot? When we see that God-man suffering from cold and privation, can we refuse to suffer and bear our trials and tribulations patiently for His sake? When we reflect on the humble and abject birth of the Son of God, shall we any longer have those proud thoughts because of our wealth, or let us practise those virtues especially taught by the Infant Jesus in the manger at Bethlehem. Let us practise the Godlike virtues of humility, poverty and mortification, and try as much as possible to imitate Him who came on earth to show us the way to heaven.

He humbled Himself by becoming man. By humility He began and completed His victory over hell. He chose as His friends and apostles the humble. And He says to His followers, "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart."

He was rich, but for our sake became poor that by His poverty we might become rich. His whole life, from the crib of Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary's heights, was one continued series of suffering and mortification endured for sinful man. Without these virtues, and especially without humility, no progress can be made on the road to heaven.

For as pride is the source of almost all sin, so humility is the foundation of all virtue.

Is there not much, then, to cause us to rejoice on this day? And should it not be a day of happiness and joy to all the world?

But, although it is a day of rejoicing for all, and especially for the poor, there are some who weighed down by poverty and misery are to be unhappy. If you know of any such, try to make him happy, at least at this joyful season by relieving his wants. Those who do so may be assured that their own Christmas time will be all the more happy and blessed; for life, who promised that a cup of cold water given in His name should not go unrewarded, will not fail to repay those who remember

His poor. Do this and you will have what I most earnestly wish you, A merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

TEMPERANCE

THOUGHTS FOR CHRISTMAS

The custom of celebrating Christmas by excessive drinking is not perhaps as prevalent now as in days gone by. Temperance sentiment has had its effect upon the people at large and a sense of shame, if nothing else, keeps within bounds that tendency to over-celebration which some of us can well remember as being characteristic of other days.

Nevertheless, the danger incident to Christmas time is not altogether gone. In many places, and among many people who ought to know better the custom of drinking intoxicants and of giving intoxicants to guests, at Christmas and New Year, still subsists, and much harm is done particularly to the young and inexperienced at festivities, which purport to be a celebration of the coming to earth of the Saviour of mankind, but which are really bacchanalian revelries reminiscent of pagan times.

Of late years, we regret to say there has been a departure from the home celebration of Christmas. It is considered smart to day for people to take their Christmas dinner at hotels, and the tendency in those places is toward an excess of gayety which accords ill with the real Christmas spirit. Christmas is indeed a time of joy, a time of good will; but those who make of it a time of flashy splendour, of licentiousness, of indulgence in liquor, wrench it from its real purpose. Such celebration of Christmas is an abuse; and among Catholic people it should not be tolerated.

The time was when Christmas was not celebrated in this part of country at all. Pagan gloom enshrouded New England in those days, and it was an offense to observe the Day which for centuries the Catholic Church has celebrated in such a joyous manner. At present, however, we have swung away so far from that straight-laced period that we are fast nearing the time, if we have not already reached it, when it may be necessary to restrain our Christmas celebration as being altogether too boisterous, too flippant, and entirely unworthy of the sweet Feast of the Nativity of Our Blessed Lord.

We hope during the coming season that Catholics who know the true meaning of Christmas will not be found among those who disgrace the name of Catholics by indulging in intemperance, or by tempting others to such over-indulgence. As there is a custom among us of taking the temperance pledge during Lent in honor of our Blessed Lord's thirst on the cross, so also during the Christmas season a similar pledge should be taken in honor of the Divine Babe in the crib.—Sacred Heart Review.

THE WAR

SOME CATHOLIC SIDELIGHTS

THE REV. PRINCE MAX GETS THE IRON CROSS

Amongst the Catholic chaplains with the German armies in Prince Max of Saxony, brother of the present King and a priest who has an intimate knowledge of both London and Paris, is the former of which he worked for some years as a curate and in the latter as a professor. This royal priest has just been decorated by the Kaiser with the Iron Cross for valor on the field. He goes everywhere with his men and in the few intervals of rest he never rests, for he is preparing the soldiers for death, hearing their confessions and administering the sacrament. The King of Saxony and his son, both Catholics, are now with the armies. There is a possibility that he both are killed in the fortunes of war Saxony will have a sacerdotal sovereign. Another Catholic commander of the German host is Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria. Many members of the Centrum are also with the army serving, some as privates, while the workmen of the clubs of Cologne and its neighborhood have scarcely a member left. The Volkverein and the Bonifaciusverein are turning all their attention to succoring the wounded and assisting those dependant on the soldiers who are heavily struck by the general trade depression and the absence of the breadwinner.

THE INFLUENCE OF FRANCE'S SOLDIER PRIESTS

It would be impossible to exaggerate the beneficial influence exercised by the priests in the French army. Proof of it is furnished every day. What for instance, can be more eloquent than the following extract from a letter addressed by a soldier to Abbe Louis Ballu, parish priest of Parney, in the department of the Chen? "This morning we left the trenches, carrying our shovels, pickaxes and rifles, to attend Mass (I could not help thinking of Parney's pretty little church and its priest in the sweet, tranquil country). That Mass was celebrated by our captain (an officer in the reserves), who had donned the sacerdotal ornaments over his blue and red uniform, the gold lace of his galons mixing with the sacred gold ornaments. He made to us an impressive but short address, and the words he spoke moved all our hearts, coming as they did from that doubly authorized mouth. At

the elevation of the Host we all felt that above men and armies He is, 'He Who reigns in heaven and Who raises all Empires—He Who permits 'That spirit of imprudence and error' 'The fatal harbinger of the fall of Kings' ("cet esprit d'imprudence et d'erreur, De la chute des rois funeste avant-coureur").

The spectacle was unforgettable when all heads bowed, the priest's chasuble left the spurs visible while the sturdy youth of La Comte were there, stalwart men, pensive and brave, the sons of those who had in former times furnished such valiant soldiers to France."

AN ABBE LIEUTENANT'S ADDRESS

The "Semaine Religieuse" of Tours relates another incident. Abbe Mauduit is in the front fighting line as lieutenant. Recently his commanding officer ordered him to lead his company to a very dangerous position, telling him he feared he was sending him to his death. The Abbe did not hesitate, but his mind was disturbed for his men. To make them accept willingly the dangerous mission he addressed them as follows, "My friends, you are all determined to do your duty. We are about to find ourselves in great danger. If sometimes in giving orders I may have appeared harsh and irritable, forgive me. You all know me well. I have always sought to show myself, courageous and I demand of you to be also courageous. You call me more often Monsieur l'Abbe or Monsieur le Curé than Mon Lieutenant. Well, as priest would you like me to give you my blessing and absolve you before we start?" Having received a unanimous affirmative reply, all the brave men bowed and made the sign of the cross religiously, while the Abbe soldier traced the sign of pardon and salvation. The company then advanced intrepidly under fire from the enemy. In a few minutes its lieutenant, Abbe Mauduit, fell wounded in the head by a bursting shell. His wound necessitated a most dangerous operation, but it is hoped his life will be saved.

GENERAL VON KLUCK A CATHOLIC

The Catholic Messenger, of Davenport, Ia., has the following interesting item: "It is said that General Von Kluck, of the German army, who has been in command of the army operating in Belgium and who made the advance upon Paris is a Catholic. It is not so well known that we have in the tri-city a first cousin of the general in the person of Father Kluck, pastor of St. Mary's (German) Church in Rock Island. Father Kluck has dropped the 'Von,' but we are informed that his father and the general's father were brothers."

VALOR OF FRANCE'S SOLDIER PRIESTS

Official homage to the valor of the soldier priests of France is the fact that on September 15, after six weeks war, eighty-two secular priests and a hundred and twenty-seven religious had been proposed to the Government by the military chiefs as deserving the Legion of Honor for their attitude under fire. These figures, says the London Catholic Times, are more eloquent than any panegyric.—Philadelphia Standard and Times.

THE MALIGNED SISTERS

Not long ago Miss Ella Fort James, member of a prominent Protestant family of Richmond, Wis., sent to the Richmond Democrat, a noble letter, in which she paid a high tribute to the maligned Sisters. We quote:

"The writer was educated in a convent, and for six years lived with Catholics. Not once in all that time was any effort made to induce her to enter the Catholic faith. No influence of that kind was brought to bear upon any of the Protestant pupils. The beautiful lives of the nuns had, however, lasting influence in other channels. One of the sweetest memories in that distant past are the hours spent in the quiet halls of that convent school."

The writer had a Protestant friend, who, at the age of sixteen, desired to become a nun. She applied to the Mother Superior of the Ursuline Convent in Galveston, Texas, and was told that her admission would not be granted without the consent of her family and without thorough premeditation on her own part. This girl afterwards decided to remain a Protestant and not one word was ever offered by the Mother Superior against this decision.

In the great tidal wave of Galveston in 1900 the Sisters of the Ursuline Convent saved hundreds of lives.

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We have used them in the family for about two years and we would not use anything else as long as we can get "Fruit-a-lives".

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Regardless of color or religious belief, they gave a shelter to the homeless, nursed the sick and comforted the bereaved in a manner that added their names to the annals of the great.

In all the history of the world, in times of stress, the nuns have moved through the labyrinth of bloody war and darkness, angels of mercy. The priests have lifted the weary and aided them in struggling along stony paths; they have held the wine of encouragement to dying lips and have made the dying hours of many hopeless ones happy. May the trouble between the sects be straightened out and each made to see that the strong arm of the other is made necessary to the welfare of all.—St. Paul Bulletin.

HEMME IN BY RING OF STEEL

PEOPLE OF BELGIUM POWERLESS TO HELP THEMSELVES IN ANY WAY

London, Dec. 4.—Herbert Clark Hoover, chairman of the American commission for relief in Belgium, returned to London, to-day after a week's trip of inspection in Belgium. Mr. Hoover reported that the distribution of foodstuffs sent in case of the American commission is well understood, but that the condition of famine which threatened the population of Belgium is still desperate and that on account of the attitude of the belligerents, the Belgians must still appeal to the people of the United States for relief.

"It is difficult to state the position of the civil population of Belgium without appearing hysterical," said Mr. Hoover in his statement. "I do not know that history presents any parallel to a population of 7,000,000 men, utterly unable, by any conceivable effort of their own, to save themselves."

From the nature of things, it is impossible for the commission even to possess any opinion on the rights and wrongs which have created this situation. The Germans state flatly that the people of Belgium are normally dependent on the importation of foodstuffs for five-sixths of their subsistence, that the Germans have not the slightest objection to the Belgians, or any one else, importing foodstuffs into Belgium, that it is not the Germans who have blocked the overseas supply, and that there is no obligation upon them to feed the civil population which could, through the normal course of trade obtain subsistence. The allies, on the other hand, contend that a free port for the importation of foodstuffs into Belgium would practically amount to an entry port for food supplies for the Germans. It is enough for us that there are 7,000,000 people ground between two gigantic millstones.

"We are meeting with no obstruction from the military authorities of Belgium in the prosecution of our work. Not one loaf of bread or a spoonful of salt that we have introduced has been taken by the military. The most stringent orders have been given that we shall have no interference and our members meet with respect and assistance in all quarters."

There are considerable quantities of vegetables available in certain districts. In some localities there is still a supply of cereals for two or three weeks, but in certain other localities there has been no bread available for over a fortnight.

Every soul will be dependent upon us for bread within thirty days.

"So far, our efforts have necessarily been devoted to provisioning the larger centers. It requires organization and patience to be able to penetrate the outlying towns and villages. It will be difficult for the people of the United States to comprehend the difficulties which we meet with, in purely executive matters, in the elaboration of this work."

The clock has absolutely stopped in Belgium. An industrial country which was dependent on the overseas before, is now walled up with 70 per cent. of the people idle. There are no telegraphs, telephones, railways or post offices except for military purposes. The Belgians, of a military necessity, are not allowed to pass from their own towns, and consequently there is no communication throughout the country except by personal visits of our own members.

CANALS BLOCKED

"Transportation by rail is possible in only a few directions and then must await military necessity. The wonderful canal system is blocked in many places by the destruction of bridges and some canals have been allowed to run dry. Therefore it becomes part of our business to get these cleared and to stimulate the subsidiary transport services of the country, not only for the transportation of our food, but to permit the transportation of coal from the Belgian mines—a sore necessity this winter."

"There are no courts and the prisons have been emptied, but the gendarmes have remained at their posts and are themselves both policemen and judges. The people are most law-abiding. The central and provincial governments have disappeared. The city and communal governments, however, still exist and through them the distribution of food is being arranged. The Belgians are applying themselves with the most extraordinary devotion to the perfection of this organization and if we lacked any other inspiration for exertion in our part of the rich and the poor, a veritable democracy of famine which is working night and day to reform their part."

FOOD TICKETS

"The detail of the method is that after investigation by the communal authorities, food tickets are issued indicating the number and amount of rations the holder is entitled to, and twice daily this ticket, is presented by the holder to the food canteens for its quota and is duly punched. The ration consists of bread, soup containing potatoes, together with a little coffee and salt."

All those who can afford to pay are compelled to pay the communal authorities at the rate of 4 cents per ration. The tickets are given tickets gratis. The communal authorities contribute to the relief committee 1 cent per diem per capita on the total tickets issued in their commune. They obtaining this revenue from the tickets sold, or by public subscription in the communes through the national committee under our supervision. These funds ultimately become available to us for the purchase of food. Furthermore, the same ration of bread and salt per diem is sold through the bakeries to agreed lists of the more well-to-do population, and as this bread is disposed of at a positive profit, our income has some further increase. Taking it all together, about one-half of the foods which we send to Belgium are paid for, so when the American people contribute two shiploads of food, they enable us to buy one more cargo."

As a type of organization, that of Brussels is simply a large example of those in each locality. In that city at present there are 13 communal kitchens and 137 canteens for adults, and there are 16 kitchens and 34 canteens for children under three years of age. For adults' service, food is prepared in the communal kitchens and is distributed to the canteens twice daily. The kitchens and canteens are maintained as a separate organization in each commune."

In order to guarantee that children are properly fed and that they are not subjected to the rigorous rations issued to adults, parents are compelled to produce all children to communal doctors, who are on constant duty in charge of the canteens. Five different kinds of tickets gradually evolve into the introduction of more solid foods until children three years old and over fall on the general canteen. In order to provide milk, the communes have taken over dairies."

THE EXTENT OF IT

"The amount and character of the destitution may perhaps be appreciated from the present conditions in Brussels. Of the population of about 650,000 remaining in the city, an average of 218,000 were on the adult canteens and 31,000 babies were on the baby canteens last week or more than one-third of the total population. There is probably no more pitiable sight ever presented than the long lines of mothers with children in arms waiting their turn at these canteens. In the industrial districts, where the people naturally would have less stores on hand than in the capital, a much larger population is now on the communal canteens, in some instances over 60 per cent. of the whole number."

"Brussels consumed 8,000 of flour per diem. There were just 92 sacks of flour in the city when our first shipment of foodstuffs arrived. When I left Brussels yesterday morning, there were 15,000 sacks in the city,

or about five days' supply. We have about two or three days' supplies in Liege and similar supplies in other centers such as Louvain, Charleroi, Namur and Luxembourg."

DISTINGUISHED CONVERTS

English Catholic exchanges chronicle the conversion to the true faith of Lady Holmes, widow of Sir Richard Holmes, K. C. V. O., V. P. S. A., who was for thirty-five years librarian to Queen Victoria and King Edward VII. at Windsor Castle. Lady Holmes is the eldest daughter of the late Rev. Canon Richard Gee, D. D., for many years Vicar of Windsor and Canon of St. George's. She was reared in the Church on All Hallows' eve by the Very Rev. Canon Drake at St. Bernard's Convent, Slough.

Admiral Sir St. George Caulfield D'Arcy Irvine, retired, of the British navy, who, as already announced, received the sacrament of baptism in the chapel of the English College, Rome, on November 9, is now eighty years old, but is hale and hearty. He joined the service at fourteen years of age and worked his way up to the important and honorable post of Admiral. He served at the Crimea, 1854-55, and got the Crimean and Turkish medals, the Sebastopol clasp and the Baltic medal. He also served in the Russo-Turkish war of 1878, and at the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882 and received the Egyptian medal and the Khedive's bronze star. In 1902 he was created a K. C. B.

IRISHMEN SHOW DARING HEROISM

Dublin, Nov. 12.—By Mail.—This story of Irish heroism is told by a trooper of the Dragoons, writing home:

"There was a man of ours who carried a chum to a farmhouse under fire, and when the retreat came got left behind."

A German patrol called and found them. There were only two, one wounded, against a dozen Uhlans. Behind a barrier of furniture they kept Germans at bay, wounding or killing half of them.

"The surviving Germans made off, and brought a machine gun to the house and threatened to destroy it. The two soldiers were not unmindful of the kindness shown them by the owners of the farm, and rather than bring loss on them or the village they rushed out, probably with some mad idea of taking the gun."

Just over the threshold of the door they fell dead, their blood bespattering the walls of the house."

IN MEXICO

The great conflict in Europe has overshadowed everything else to such an extent that happenings which at other times would receive the widest and closest attention are passed by or overlooked as too trivial for anything but local consideration. This is especially the case with Mexico, where the situation has rapidly been growing worse, and approaching the stage where some kind of intervention by the United States seems inevitable. The "fighting for freedom" of the armies of Villa, Carranza and Zapata has degenerated to the level of the bestial. In all parts of Mexico convents are being sacked and burned, their inmates brutally treated, churches desecrated, schools razed, and the children beaten and tortured. Pilgrage, butchered and lust are abroad in Mexico, with the abandon customary to the most savage hordes of Asia and Africa. A little more of this and Mexico will be erased from the roll of Christian nations. It is going to take something bigger than an ignorant bandit chief to restore Mexico. President Wilson has managed to keep out of the European struggle but paganism triumphant to the south of him may force him to take a hand at the war game nearer home.—London Advertiser.

Art that suggests passion is like a fallen angel.—Archbishop Keane.

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