

## FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

## FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

## OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S LAW

"When Jesus was twelve years old, they went to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast, and having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and His parents knew it not." (Luke 2:42)

"When Jesus was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast." Who will not be struck with admiration for the Holy Family, when reading these lines in the Gospel? Jesus, the new Lawgiver, the very Son of God, equal to His Father in all things, obeys His earthly parents, Joseph and Mary, and goes to Jerusalem to celebrate the accustomed feast of the season. Soon new feasts would be celebrated, but He had not as yet abolished the customs and ceremonies of the Old Law, and so long as it existed, it was to be obeyed. He was not bound by any law, but as His Father had ordained, He present time He wished His parents to act and He wished to obey. There is more in this instance of our Divine Lord's actions than the world of today is wont to follow. Here is an exemplification of absolute obedience to and fulfillment of God's law; the world would like to obey as it pleases and fulfill it as it pleases. The spirit of regard for God's commands and subjection to them is not as reverential as it should be, save among a very limited class. If we consider the scene laid before us in this Gospel and the ordinary behavior of this generation, we cannot help noticing the amazing contrast.

The lesson taught us by the Holy Family should be learned in its entirety. We, as Catholics, above all the rest of the world, still retain a great reverence for God's law and a more or less conscientious obligation to fulfill it in every minor particular. Some may be swayed a little by the spirit around them, but they are not a majority. The most delicate regard for God's law and the purest conception of its obligations exist among the true members of Christ's Church; but, in the midst of customary practices and beliefs, one must be strong in order to be faithful to convictions and prompt in duty. A study made of God's law, to some extent at least, and unceasing prayer for perseverance must ever ascend to Him who gives the faith to believe and the grace to live accordingly.

The world has come to consider that wherever a reform is needed, a change is required in practically every particular. As a rule this is true of any work of man that has deteriorated or run into decay. The works of man are necessarily fallible and imperfect. He has but limited intelligence and power, and can as a consequence attain but limited perfection, even in the greatest and best of his accomplishments and institutions. When there comes failure, as is often the case, his successors consider him to have made a mistake, and their method of reform is to destroy the original and to substitute something new. Men have endeavored to extend this method to the works and laws of God, and, of course, have erred. We must always bear in mind that God's works are perfect—man can not improve them in any respect whatsoever. God, in His infinite intelligence and with power absolutely unlimited, does what is best in the best way. When it appears that His works are decaying—or His laws unsuited to the needs of the world—He does not fall into the error of the world, but only a secondary note that man is failing in his obedience to God's eternal decrees and in his respect for them and is losing the right conception of God and His works.

When a difficulty as regards the fulfillment of God's law seems to exist, we must conclude that disordered man is to blame, and not that the Maker's commands no longer are suited to the world. We do not speak of physical disability now, but of that worldly difficulty so many are accustomed to make capital of and use by saying that the world is not what it was formerly. Be that as it may, no change incompatible with God's establishments is lawful. His institution—the Church—must remain the same from the foundation on the first Pentecost, to its end on the last day of the world. If a reform ever were needed, it was not in the Church, nor in her practices and laws as given to her by God, but among the people claiming adherence to her, or standing afar from her and loudly denouncing her impracticability and her superstitious rites. They are like the Pharisees who claimed that Christ worked through the devil. How fortunate should man consider himself in having a Church that is an infallible, unchanging God has established!

What would we be if we had to submit to the ideas of man in matters of religion? What are the religions of man today but the products of disordered brains, or the results of violations of the sacred laws of charity? According to some modern opinions, any one may establish his own religion; but as a matter of fact, many do without any religion at all, as this course leaves them much freer.

There never will be unity in the world, or one religion among men, until all realize that God has established a Church which can never change, and never grow old. Her practices and laws are binding in conscience on all occasions and during our entire lifetime. She will remain so, until God Himself changes her, which will never be. One man not be improved upon; our notions

of reform regarding her and of her betterment are but signs of our pride and our unwillingness to subject ourselves to her.

The example set us by the Holy Family is the one to follow. There should be no question of righteousness, no discussion of opportuneness, but willing obedience. If we do not obey, we shall be destroyed spiritually. As we must obey the legitimate demands of nature in order to live physically, so must we obey the demands of our Church in order to live and thrive spiritually. We need not expect to face God on judgment day and find His smile benign, if during life we have found fault with and disobeyed His laws as given us through His Church. Imagine our confusion in the realization that we had made a futile attempt to reform His Church, and had endeavored to change things that were immutable wishes after our own fancy rather than conform to His immutable wishes. What we have, God has given us; consequently it is good. If it does not seem to us to be what it should be, let us conscientiously examine our own selves, and we shall find that it is we who are not what we should be.

## HOW HERESIES PERISH

One of the most significant and startling "signs of the times," beyond all doubt, is the manifest process of decay and destruction which is now going on in the Established Church of England. It can, with justice, be said that there is not a dogma of the historical Christian faith which is not disputed or explicitly denied, and a belief in which the so-called discoveries of physical or biblical science are not pronounced to have made impossible. And the attack on these dogmas does not proceed from the superficial and shallow-minded, from the slaves of passion, or from those wholly absorbed in the pursuit of temporal gains and interests, to whom a denial of the essential verities of religion comes as a relief to both mind and conscience; it proceeds from the very heart and center of the Establishment itself, from those appointed to be the guardians and defenders of the truths in question and who have solemnly pledged themselves "to banish and drive away from amongst them all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word."

Not very long ago a learned canon of Anglican Westminster declared publicly and amidst the applause of his hearers, most of whom were clergymen, that "systematic observance had made it practically certain that man was not specially created by God, but that he is the end of a vast evolutionary process. He told them that "to the biologist he is cousin to the ape, his ancestry, as embryology shows, going back through amphibians to fishes, etc." And in the light of these so-called scientific facts, the learned canon airily disposed of the traditional doctrine of the fall of man, declaring that man "is struggling not to regain a lost perfection, but to realize the divinely appointed end of the whole terrestrial process."

But, as we might have concluded from a glance at the history of the rise and decay of all ancient heresies, the process of disruption does not stop there. It is not merely one of the fundamental verities of the Christian religion which is denied. Other and even more important ones are included in the work of destruction and are shown to be untenable in the light of this same modern science. In a publication hailing from England we come upon the startling statement from the pen of an apparently well-informed writer to the effect that "if an Anglican clergyman of our day desires to become a bishop, he must deny the divinity of Christ."

It is difficult to image how dogmatic disruption and spiritual decay can go further, and we have surely in such a pronouncement as this the most striking evidence of the rapidly-waning influence of the Anglican Establishment over the minds of man and of the fact that it can no longer be regarded as in any intelligent sense a spiritual or civilizing force or power. An institution which commits itself to such statements as these has manifestly ceased to be Christian and is back in paganism.

It is really necessary at this hour of the day to emphasize the fact that Christianity stand or falls with the dogma of the divinity of Christ, and that it is upon the belief in this dogma that our Christian civilization has been built up. With its rejection or disbelief we are most certainly back in paganism. We all know the condition of the world before Christ came. With a high civilization, a flourishing commerce, and a general outward refinement, man was associated a depravity which defied all human remedies. "We see," writes Niebuhr, the great historian of Rome, "that things had come to a point at which no earthly power could afford any help. Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind."

It was to this corrupt and decaying world that God spoke by the trumpet call of Christ—by a visible divine manifestation on earth, into which he introduced the elements of life and of order and right principles of human duty and of human conduct. And in proportion as the divine nature of this call was recognized and as the hearts and minds of men yielded a willing obedience, did the world progress and did a true and healthy civilization displace the false and corrupted one.

For centuries, therefore, did the best and wisest men of all nations adhere to the central truth of the divinity of Christ; with their very life-blood did they defend it and guard it against corruption. Full well did they know that with it there is bound up all that is true and good and ennobling in human nature—that it is, as Mr. W. E. Gladstone so well said, "the only hope of our wayward race."

Are these heretical re-fashioners of Christianity realizing this bed-rock truth? Are they realizing that our Christian civilization was initiated by a divine and not a human impulse and that it is only by the continued activity of divine and vital energies that it can be kept from straying from the right path and from coming to grief? It is surely a truth from which there is no possible escape and to which the events of our day are bearing striking and incontrovertible testimony. Scientific men and misguided theologians may dangle before the minds of men the picture of a purely human Christ of purely human origin and authority. The unreflecting masses may welcome this presentation as more conformable to what they are pleased to call enlightened methods of thought; but they will find, and, indeed, some of them are already finding, that such a presentation is not merely contrary to fact and truth, but that it is one from which no right-thinking man and no nation can derive enduring strength and courage for the conflict of life. It cannot supply that link which binds the soul to God, holding it subject to a divine authority and in living contact with that supernatural world-order for which it is destined. It can only enable man to cultivate the earth-born and barren, and therefore fruitless forces of his nature.

We would commend to these Anglican pseudo-theologians the striking words of a non-Catholic but logical thinker of our day: "Christianity with a non-miraculous Christ," writes Mr. W. H. Mallock, is merely a form of opinion, of feeling or of prejudice which is, no doubt honest even to the degree of fanaticism, but which is due entirely to peculiar and transient circumstances; which has no abiding foundation in science, logic or history, and which, though retaining at present the semblance of many Christian features, retains them only like shapes taken by a cloud, and doomed to be lost or metamorphosed in the inevitable readjustment of the air."—Catholic Union and Times.

## GENERAL INTENTION FOR JANUARY

RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XV.

DEFENCE OF THE CHURCH

Ever since the religious upheaval of the sixteenth century the Catholic Church has had practically to assume a defensive attitude in such countries as Germany, England and the Scandinavian nations. These countries abandoned their hereditary beliefs, yielded to the new "reformed" doctrines, and ever after treated the true Church of God as an enemy. But Protestantism never succeeded in undermining the faith of the Latin or the Celtic races. Today, as in the days of Luther and Calvin, these two races are on the whole attached to the Catholic religion, and whether their populations be fervent or lukewarm, they have invariably turned their faces away from Protestantism. Those who have succumbed are few and discredited; Latin and Celtic apostates and their descendants are without either light or interior life.

Here in America the situation has been more complex. In the past century waves of immigration brought people from all countries to these shores, among whom were vast numbers of Catholics. In the early days of settlement, owing to the absence of the atmosphere and the traditions of the ancient Catholic lands, and the dearth of schools, churches and clergy, there was undoubtedly a great deal of leakage among our people. It is sad to have to admit that the sturdy faith of our ancestors, which withstood persecution in the older countries which had to be faced in the New World. True indeed, the first generation jealously adhered to the doctrines and practices they had brought with them across the ocean, but as the outcome of the conditions just mentioned and of social contact with people possessing all forms of religious belief, the second or third generation only too often became the victims of indifference, mixed marriages, and so on, and as Saint Paul describes it, "made shipwreck concerning the faith." There are in America many children of Catholic immigrants of the last century who no longer belong to the Catholic faith.

And yet, notwithstanding this leakage, ours is still numerically the largest denomination in this continent, and it would be folly to sit down with folded arms and content ourselves with deploring our losses. The duty of Catholics today is not merely to hold to their own in numbers and in influence, but to try to augment both, and thus make up in some way for the losses of the past. We have advantages that our forefathers did not enjoy. Schools, churches, priests, and social services and we should profit by these facilities in order to hold fast to the faith that has been handed down to us. This should be an easy task,

for we possess the truth which needs only to be known to be accepted by men of good will. The intellect is made for truth and should not resist truth when presented in the right way. "How can a man who reads history and believes in Christ, knowing that He established His Church upon earth two thousand years ago, with a promise that it would last forever, yet remain outside of that Church, and affiliate himself with organizations founded by men and teaching doctrines that are denials of the fundamental teachings of the Church of God?" This is a question which every non-Catholic should put to himself, for he is bound in conscience to answer it. It is also a question which should be uppermost in the minds of zealous Catholics in their relations with their Protestant neighbors, a familiarity with the teaching of the Church of God? This is a question which every non-Catholic should put to himself, for he is bound in conscience to answer it. It is also a question which should be uppermost in the minds of zealous Catholics in their relations with their Protestant neighbors, a familiarity with the teaching of the Church of God?

Now this is a task which need not be restricted to the Catholic clergy, who may be depended upon to do their duty; it is one that should interest the rank and file in the Church. Lay Catholics should also become aggressive in the apostolic sense. They should resist religious error every time it shows its head, they should defend the doctrines they profess; scotch bigotry, and prevent lies from being wafted about. They are poor specimens of lay Catholics, who, when they hear their Church maligned or her teachings traduced, shrug their shoulders and ask, "What harm can it do?"

Naturally, lay activity in defence of the Church presupposes at least some knowledge of religious truth. It presupposes a training in the natural world-order for which it is destined. It can only enable man to cultivate the earth-born and barren, and therefore fruitless forces of his nature. There is no lack of literature nowadays to interest Catholic laymen. They have only to glance over the Catholic publishing house and make their choice of useful books. Better still, why not make use of the agencies and means that are already established amongst us, for instance, the of opinion, of feeling or of prejudice which is, no doubt honest even to the degree of fanaticism, but which is due entirely to peculiar and transient circumstances; which has no abiding foundation in science, logic or history, and which, though retaining at present the semblance of many Christian features, retains them only like shapes taken by a cloud, and doomed to be lost or metamorphosed in the inevitable readjustment of the air."—Catholic Union and Times.

One of the most popular and most fruitful sources of religious knowledge at the present day, is the organization known as the Catholic Truth Society. Its object is the diffusion of sound literature in cheap pamphlet form, dealing with historical, dogmatic, controversial and moral questions. Its pamphlets come from the pens of experts, men thoroughly competent to treat their subjects. Thousands of topics have been already written about, and to have read and studied even a fraction of them would constitute a liberal education for any Catholic layman. Would it be too much to ask our own people who have any zeal for the welfare of their Church to invest freely in these pamphlets? And not merely read them for their own instruction, but also spread them among their non-Catholic neighbors in order that the truth may take root in some soul or other?

The printed word is a powerful engine in the hands of a zealous Catholic, and the defence of the Church should urge our laymen to make good use of it. And yet how many homes are there that never see a Catholic paper or magazine! Usually the people who live in homes where there is no Catholic literature belong to the spineless, indifferent class, whose lives are lukewarm in the service of God. Such homes become sources of leakage, and their inmates are of little credit to the Church in which they claim membership. A Catholic newspaper entering our homes every week, and the possession of a number of its pamphlets would be proof that our love for the Church is not simply platonic; that we are constant reminders that we are members of vast organization whose branches extend to every corner of the globe, and that we should be interested in the Church whose fortunes we should follow closely, and whose growth in numbers and in influence should be one of our strongest desires.

Another thing which is a powerful factor in the defence of the Church is the good example given to their neighbors by Catholics who are faithful to their religion. Fair-minded people outside the fold are impressed by the rigor of our laws regarding charity and commutative justice. They are impressed by the sacrifices we make for the religious training of our children. They are impressed by the magnitude of our colleges, convents, hospitals, asylums and other institutions. We know how deep is the impression made on Protestants by the spectacle given by our tens of thousands who go to Mass in all Sunday weathers. All these impressions are worth cultivating. Example leads to imitation; nay more, example is often the first spark of grace granted to souls craving for truth. We know that all Catholics realize what a strong influence the fearless profession of their faith gives them among their non-Catholic neighbors! On the day of Judgment they will be called to answer not merely for their sins of commission but also for their sins of omission, that is to say, for the good which they might have done and which they left undone. The power of being called to account for his sins of omission filled with apprehension the great St. Charles Borromeo while he was on his deathbed. In truth the same prospect should be enough to make us all take a retrospective glance now and then, and seriously

ask ourselves not merely what we may possibly be doing by our word and our example to prevent the spread of God's Church on earth, but also what we are omitting to do which might be done in favor of the same object. We should, at least during the present month, as loyal children of the Church and in obedience to our Holy Father, resolve to defend our faith according to our opportunities. In a mixed population like ours occasions often present themselves; let us not be found wanting when these occasions arise.

E. J. DEVINE, S. J.

## TRIBUTE PAID TO POPE BENEDICT

The November issue of Current Opinion has an interesting article on the Holy Father. It is entitled "Benedict XV.: The Most Influential Pope Since the Reformation." It quotes many foreign papers and gives a good summary of the Pope's public and private life. The article in part is as follows:

"The Sovereign Pontiff who in less than six years has made the Vatican the most powerful court in Europe is described in the London Mail as a 'little fellow, stooping, bespectacled figure' not bowed down by any weight of years—Benedict XV. is young as Popes go—but drooping, sorrowful, solitary. All the journalists of Europe who have seen him recently dwell upon the contrast between his sprightly attitude when he was Bishop of Bologna and the melancholy in which his soul now seems steeped. In those old days at Bologna the man was cheerful, smiling, ready with gestures in the vivacious Italian way, notes the Action of Paris; but now the attitude is usually reserved, the words are few, the expression of the countenance is serious, the eyelids droop heavily. The rapid, nervous walk has grown deliberate. The flesh—and the Pope was never plump—has wasted, the hair has become quite gray. The voice, which was always, next to his manner, the man's supreme charm, seems richer, more flexible, more responsive than ever to each shade of meaning as his countenance relaxes into passivity. One reads in the French press that His Holiness has the most expressive voice in Europe, the most gracious gravity and an innocence of expression when his face is in repose that can scarcely be reconciled with his fame as the greatest living master of the art of diplomacy."

Descriptions of his daily routine as set forth in the London newspaper emphasize the fact of the Pope's loneliness. He seldom goes to bed until midnight, and he has been toiling there for five hours—ever since he ate the frugal supper in a little room all alone. He may have had a very quiet afternoon, the monotony of it broken by an hour's walk in the gardens, or perhaps by a carriage ride—the only open air exercise he usually gets. It is the period of relaxation, of recreation. He seems able then and only then to dismiss from his mind the anxieties of the pontificate to listen to the anecdotes or stories of which he is fond and to talk with men who have visited strange lands and fished in distant rivers. Conversation can scarcely be said to take place on such occasions for the Pope is by natural propensity a listener and by temperament shy.

## HIS DAILY ACTIVITIES

"Although the Pope is seldom in bed before midnight, he is up and dressed every morning at five o'clock and yet he will not begin his daily Mass for an hour. He spends the interval in prayer and in reading either the Scriptures or one of the fathers—always in Latin. He seldom leaves his Mass in the strictest privacy although he will assist at another Mass very soon, kneeling humbly as if he were an altar boy. This brings the Pope along to eight o'clock, when a cup of black coffee, quite hot, is served. There may be fruit on the tray, or a dry biscuit, but the Pope does not often consume anything for his breakfast but this cup of coffee. He is served by a valet, an elderly man who has been with him for years and who is as reserved, as solitary and as self-effacing as his master."

"For a period of five hours, extending to one o'clock in the afternoon, the Pope is working. He may have an enormous mass of correspondence on his desk. He may have a series of important audiences with prelates or pilgrims from all over the world. He may have a plan to announce, a ceremony to conduct in St. Peter's, a consultation with reference to some critical appointment. These details are always according to schedule and the arrangements must be made quite in advance. The only mania the Pope has, we read in the Giornale di Roma, is for thoroughness. For instance, he is keen on the subject of his letters. If he can not read them all—and sometimes hundreds arrive in the course of a single day—they must become the subject of a memorandum or series of annotations. The Pope runs his eye over the jottings on the sheets of paper and if the entries are not satisfactory he directs that every letter be brought to him instantly. He will read every one of the letters after that for days until the physical impossibility of attending to so many correspondents obliges him to fall back upon the secretarial force."

"The Pope has the same anxiety to scrutinize documents upon which he makes notes in a firm and small hand

which does not betray his sixty five years in the least. He displays this anxiety, the Roman daily says in dealing with individuals. He will make no appointment to even an inconspicuous host until he is supplied with enough biographical data about each individual candidate to fill a small book. He has an uncanny sense about such things. If a fact or a paper is missing he realizes it at once and the whole affair has to go over until the deficiency is made good. The same eagerness for detail is revealed disconcertingly when audiences are granted to petitioners of one kind and another. The Pope listens with downcast eyes in total silence until his visitor has told his tale. Then that quiet voice asks a question, searching, sometimes embarrassing, for it goes to the heart of the subject and is never easy to answer without a long explanation to which the Pope listens with the same patience as before."

"Having put in some hours after this fashion, the Pope sits down all alone to a dinner in which the principal items are roast veal, wine, bread, fruit, olives, macaroni, cheese, thick gravy. Once in a while there may be an omelet or perhaps a lump of stewed meat. A few years ago an innovator thought the Pope ought to hear a little music at his dinner and the notes of an orchestra reached his ears from an adjoining gallery. His Holiness was greatly shocked by the liveliness of the air, which did not seem to him to fit in with the heaviness of the times. This experiment like that of tempting him with an English dinner of roast beef and potatoes, topped off with pudding, ended disastrously. There are no innovations now, report the Roman dailies, and they add that the Pope sticks to the traditional etiquette of solitude when he dines. He always eats alone, reports the London Mail, 'day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year.' There are days also on which the Pope adheres to a rule of silence for twenty-four hours he will not say a word except when he is at Mass. There are also days consecrated to the observances of the fast and the Pope dispenses with food during the entire twenty-four hour period. He takes a short nap every day when he has finished his dinner."

The genius of the Pope is diplomatic, and in that field has been achieved the supreme triumph of this pontificate. His methods are those of that Cardinal Rampolla who so narrowly escaped election to the Pontifical throne some sixteen years ago, and the Pope's ideal in ecclesiastical statesmanship, the Debate says, is Leo XIII. The means seem best summed up as a union of organization with information, the information being wonderfully comprehensive and accurate. The Vatican seems at this moment the greatest centre of news and ideas in all that relates to international affairs, and its diplomatic establishment is the best equipped and—this fact is not so well known—the most extensive in the world. His Holiness takes a direct personal interest in its administration, being always in touch with the Cardinal Secretary of State. The diplomatic receptions at the Vatican are the most splendid in Europe, and in the opinion of many newspapers abroad the most important. No man leaves for his post without a final audience with Pope Benedict, and nouncio returns without reporting directly to him. The Vatican policy is not only determined by the Sovereign Pontiff, but administered by him, with such careful attention to detail that, if we are to believe the Italian press, the staff of the Secretariat of State is little more than a clerical force. As for the envoys of the Vatican in the different capitals, they are held to rigid standards of efficiency and the elimination of the weak is stringent. The revival of the Vatican as a great power in diplomacy is the personal achievement of Benedict XV."

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