

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST

PERSEVERANCE

Who shall also confirm you unto the end? (I. Cor. 13:8)

There is no greater comfort than the promise conveyed in these words of the apostle; that our Lord will grant us the grace of perseverance. Yet poor, distrustful human nature finds it hard to believe in perseverance. Heaven is so great a boon, and we are so unworthy, that it looks like the best wisdom to be always trembling about the future. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling" is a favorite text with many good souls, the very ones to whom it is least applicable. Fear is too often the dominant note in the religious life of the average Christian. Well, you may say that fear is a good thing; yes, I will add that it is a necessary thing. But is it the motive best calculated to obtain the grace of perseverance?

In answer to that we must say that perseverance cannot be, properly speaking, merited at all. Or you may understand me better if I put it in this way: It is not possible to know with absolute certainty that we shall persevere to the end. Nevertheless, we know as a matter of fact that a good life is crowned by a happy death. What follows from this? Why, of course, that the higher the motives on account of which we serve God, the nearer we can come to the certainty of perseverance; the higher the degree of probability we shall have. Hence, perseverance is mainly a question of motives, of intentions, of reasons why we keep the law of God. God looks to the motives. "Son, give Me thy heart." The nobler the motive the better the chance of perseverance. The nobler the motive the nobler we are ourselves, and the more worthy we are of the divine favor to the end. A man deserving is rated according to his intention. Now, the two great motives of virtue are fear and love. The truth is that human nature, fallen though it be, is too noble to be governed by fear except for a time. In the long run love must rule, love is necessary for perseverance. Indeed, it is hard to see how one can help loving a Being Who of His own love for us gave us our lives as our Creator, redeems us by the death of His only begotten Son, and sanctifies us in the true Church by the gift of His Holy Spirit.

Well, then, if not dead sure of perseverance, we can at least have a working certainty of it. We can love God. Surely it is easier to love than to fear, especially after one has had his sins forgiven. It is easier to keep out of sin from love of God than from fear of hell. In fact, no man knows or can know how hateful sin is unless he loves God. Take a comparison: Which child turns out to be the best man—the one brought up with a horse-whip, or the one brought up with affection—affectionate instruction, affectionate correction? Which is the better citizen—the one who has a profound fear of the police or the man who loves his country? So, which is the better Christian—the one who is all of a tremble at the divine wrath or the one who finds in God's service peace, and rest, and joy because he serves for love?

And it stands to reason that the Christian who serves from love shall get the crown of life at the end. We cannot be sure—at least as we are sure that two and two make four—that we shall persevere. But it is true, all the same, that as long as a man sincerely loves God he need not fear to die. It is to such that St. Paul says that God will confirm him "unto the end, as he confirmed in them the testimony of Christ, so that," as the apostle continues, "nothing is wanting to Him in any grace, waiting for the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Brethren, a life of love is followed by a happy death. On the other hand, your failure to persevere after even a good confession and Communion, even after a well-made mission, was because you tried to make fear do the work of love. Try the other way. Try to love God. Fear is the beginning of wisdom, but love is the fruit of the law. Fear is a good quarter-horse; but for the long race of life you must have love.

TEMPERANCE

THE "CLUB" EVIL

A judge in a neighboring State said recently that the liquor statutes are in no way more flagrantly abused than through the sale of liquor under the name of a club organization. The saloon is a public place and violations may be detected, even though they are not often punished. The club closes its doors against the general public, and only those who are known to the members are admitted. A great deal of the Sunday drunkenness comes from the club formed primarily for the purpose of providing a place where liquor may be had when the saloons are closed. Catholic men should not join clubs of this kind.

The above appeared some time ago in the Sacred Heart Review. It bears out the argument often made before in the Abolition, that the great obstacle in the way of temperance progress is not the ordinary drinker who goes to the cheap saloon, but the so-called respectable drinker; the man who drinks and does not get drunk publicly at least and who would not dream of pouring the vile liquor on which the police court drunkard gets intoxicated down his aristocratic throat. The saloon is no place for such as he. It would be decidedly *infra dig.* for him to rub elbows with the class which frequent it. Consequently, he buys an interest in a private saloon by paying a fancy fee for admission into a club. The club is a mighty institution. Its members are all men of influence and standing. The young man who is ambitious to raise his head above the crowd feels that membership in the club will be a sort of hall mark of gentility, and joins it as soon as he can afford it, or before that matter. Once in he has started on the path of dalliance with drink, and he ends up where thousands like him have ended up.

"Catholic men should not join clubs of this kind," the Review says. Of

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course they should not, but they do. In but a few cases the men who belong to this kind of club do not belong to any Catholic society. The duties which the membership in the club entails do not leave them time for that. As for belonging to a total abstinence society, that is not over to be dreamed of. The League of the Cross offers so few social advantages. One has to call everybody "Brother" there, no matter whether his clothes fit or his linen is clean or not. Daddiedly one does not gain any prestige by belonging to the League of the Cross. And these are men of influence and standing, and powerful factors in moulding public opinion. The League of the Cross, or whatever temperance society it may happen to be is deprived of that influence, has that influence opposed to it, in fact. No wonder the work of directing public opinion into the right channel is slow and arduous.

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of the Cross are fighting the fight for temperance under the sacred banner of the cross. If anything were needed to prove to them that their work is holy and acceptable to God it is the open opposition, or the more deadly contemptuous indifference, of the class of Catholics who prefer membership in a club which exists for the purpose of ensuring its members a "respectable" place to drink to working for the cause of Total Abstinence under the banner of the cross. Let this be a thought to comfort and console the despised temperance worker when he feels that the struggle is hopeless. The struggle is not hopeless. It has only begun, and it is going to continue, and to be successful. And even if there were no hope of ultimate success, it would still be foolish to despond. The Royal Palmist tells us that it is better to be despised in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of sinners; which, applied to our work, means that it is better to suffer contempt and reproaches as a member of the League of the Cross than to belong to the club and be courted and respected, and either openly opposing the work of the Lord, or in that middle condition described as neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, and therefore particularly nauseating.

AN EVERYDAY VIEW OF TEMPERANCE

The supernatural view of temperance, as of all the virtues, is, of course, the highest one to take, and consequently the one generally taken by Catholics. Yet it would appear that the laity in almost universally taken by others, is often quite effective. The failure of the more exalted consideration can not, of course, arise from the motive itself, but comes from our inability to reach it. It would be well, therefore, if Catholics, while holding up the higher motive, would also dwell on the practical effects of temperance.

No one in our day can fail to see how deplorably handicapped the drinking man is in every walk of life. That he can not be safely trusted in responsible positions goes without saying. He must, therefore, be satisfied with a place inferior to that which his talents otherwise qualify him for, if he is to work at all. Socially, his condition is quite as bad. His friendship no one can value, for the drinking habit so debases his nature, that he can not be loyal, if he would. There comes a time in the process of degradation when the victim of alcohol can scarcely tell the truth.

But what drinking man ever begins with the intention of becoming an inebriate? Probably none. But let us look at the matter sanely. There are few people who drink at all that do not go to excess sometimes. Indeed, it is much easier to abstain totally than to drink always in moderation. Consequently, we would say to the young, and it is for these we are writing—leave the seductive beverage severely alone. You have no natural appetite for it. Indeed, you have appetites enough, some of which you will have to strive earnestly against. But don't add a dangerous artificial one to their number. It is not uncommon to see juvenile hopefulness spurned by the action of the young man, confident in his strength, and feeling that since now he can take a drink or refuse it, just as he pleases, can not see why this may not always be so. The experience of others counts little for him. Hundreds of thousands of his fellow-mortals, who have gone down in disgrace, had at one time such confidence. What of it? He will show them how a man may drink without becoming drunk, and how the experience of mankind is lost whenever presumption dominates the young mind.

Let us grant that is unquestionably true, that there are men who can drink without ever going far. But their number is small, so small, indeed, that it were next to madness for the average individual to claim company with them. But even though one should possess this very special strength, it will take many years to convince his fellowmen that he has it. In the meantime he must suffer from suspicion wherever he goes. Insurance companies will discriminate against him, certain positions are altogether closed to him, and his best friends must view the probabilities with alarm. And for what is all this sacrifice made? Simply for a stimulant that is neither necessary nor beneficial, and for which there is no desire that is not superinduced.

Let our young people, therefore, put aside foolish visions of what seldom comes to pass and survey the situation calmly and practically. Let them see themselves as they see others, or as others see them. If they do, they will readily discover that even the occasional drink is taken at tremendous risk, and therefore can not justify itself before the bar of reason.—Catholic Citizen.

IN THEIR OWN CHURCH

A non-Catholic contemporary contains in an recent issue a paper treating of "The Workingman in His Own Church." Singularly enough, while the matter is treated almost entirely from the standpoint of the non-Catholic churches, the writer does not seem to touch the heart of the question. As long as the Church is conducted merely on business principles, and made to compete with concerns that cater solely to pleasure and entertainment, it will never attract the great mass of men who look to it for spiritual guidance and consolation.

In the Catholic Church there is no question as to the social position of her members. The roof that can shelter the man of wealth is at the same time the home of the workingman. At her communion table every order of social and industrial life meet side by side. There, at least, all men are brothers, consecrating in her divine worship that common kinship which was announced formally by our Lord, and declared in His gospel. For this reason the workingman does not ask at the church door whether he is welcome or not. He does not ask if this be a wealthy or a poor church. He knows that it is his church his spiritual home, and with that feeling he kneels in undisturbed devotion. It is because the Catholic Church recognizes no distinction of wealth or poverty in her temples that her churches are almost everywhere there, four, five and sometimes eight or ten

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A great falling off in attendance at Protestant churches in New York during the summer furnishes the New York daily papers with some interesting, perhaps one may call them striking, paragraphs. Sober congregations are discovered even in the best-known churches which are apt to draw the out-of-town visitors, and which keep their services as elaborate and complete in summer as in those seasons when everybody is in town. Not in years has the attendance been so small. One observer said after a round of the churches: "Trinity had had 300, St. Bartholomew's 250, and the Fifth Avenue 750." Seven hundred and fifty might be considered a fairly large number for a Protestant church in the summer season, but then the "Fifth Avenue has had from 1,800 to 2,500." The attendance at these churches is by no means the poorest. The same observer, in his rounds, found "only 26 persons in the congregation of the Holy Trinity, and only 40 at St. Thomas." Other churches which merely keep services going during the



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finite Christian message things might have been otherwise. An appeal to Christians that is based on glittering generalities will not move the masses for the individual. The Bible is no longer the rule of faith except perhaps in theory and Protestants have themselves to blame for it—America.

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