

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST

CHARITY TO OUR NEIGHBOR

"Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith." (Gal. vi. 10.)

The truth and the fitness of the old saying, "Charity begins at home," is well demonstrated from these words of St. Paul to the Galatians. Reason itself dictates that our charity should be exercised primarily in favor of those to whom we are under obligations. Our parents are the first toward whom we should show charity, even after we have fulfilled whatever obligations toward them that justice imposes upon us. After our parents, our other blood relations demand charity of us. Last of all come those to whom we are in no way related, nor in any way connected, save that we and they are children of the same God.

There is, however, another relationship that has been established between certain others of the human race and ourselves; namely, the relationship of faith. Naturally we are closer to those who agree with us in the same faith, and are to those who differ from us. This relationship should influence us while performing our acts of charity, for it has the first demand upon us. St. Paul intends this when he says: "Let us work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith." Charity should be shown to all, but especially to those who are closely bound to us by the ties of blood relationship, or by the ties of spiritual connection.

St. Paul, of course, does not speak here expressly of charity, nor does he mean charity alone, but the truth we have mentioned is contained, implicitly at least, in his words. Our duty is toward our parents and our other relations, both by blood and by faith, first and in all things concerning them. Charity, which, in the sense we have taken it, may be called our second duty, follows the same rule.

God Himself, though His charity extends to all men, cares for His own spiritual children first. He has, in the past, granted the greatest favors to those who were closest to Him. Consider how wonderfully He blessed the saints, the great body of men and women who consumed their whole being in His service and for His love. This class is today, also, the one He helps and favors most. No such signal favors as are granted to the just are conferred upon those who fail to serve God. Perhaps, from a worldly standpoint, many who neglect their duty to God appear to be the recipients of greater blessings than are given to the just; but, considering life in its fullness, their blessings are infinitely less than those that come, and will come especially in the other world to the just.

Since God's example encourages it, reason dictates it, and it is recommended by the inspired writers of God's word, it is evident that we should show special favor toward "those who are of the household of the faith." We lead in common with them a spiritual life; we are blessed with the same blessings; jointly we praise God on earth; together, if we live faithfully, we shall sing His praises eternally in heaven; we also pray for one another. Should we not, then, do good first to our brethren of the Faith? How weak the links that join us together and form a chain of Christians, if we do not act in this manner!

It must be admitted, however, that, principally for worldly reasons, many Catholics fail to help and support their own first. The snares laid by earthly glory easily trap thousands of our influential and wealthy Catholics, and hold them away from the true merits that would come from duty and charity done toward those to whom it is first due. Often when they are approached for aid for some worldly enterprise, or for some cause that is being widely advertised, their generosity is abundant. It is still greater, if their gifts will win them some influence and carry their name beyond the confines of their own little territory. They pay but little attention to the nature of the cause itself; sometimes it is in direct contradiction or opposition to the Faith that they have inherited and which they know to be true. They are selfish, however, and desire the little personal glory their gifts will bring to them but pay no heed to the fact that the cause they are helping is hurtful to their religion. The Catholic who will give aid to any cause that is openly or actually opposed to his religion is a traitor to his own Faith. This opposition to the Faith need not be the principal object of the cause. To keep the Catholic from contributing toward a cause, it should be enough that, by or through its object our religion be attacked only secondarily, or even occasionally. It is the half-hidden creeping serpent that is to be feared more than the lion on the open plains.

Often our wealthier co-religionists are asked to aid some Catholic cause that is not urged as strongly, dissenting and non-sectarian friends, and will not enhance their merits before the general public; and we must confess that it is rare that they then give of their goods gener-

ously. The justice of the cause is generally evident, and its merits not to be doubted, but it can bring no great earthly glory to the benefactor; as a consequence, the appeals made in aid of it are either gracefully neglected, or else unwillingly and ungenerously responded to merely to be saved from further appeals.

Among Catholics, also, this lack of support of their own noted in the case of Catholic societies. Men of our faith protested against the condemnation of certain societies that the Church found unfit for her children. In time, Catholic societies of the highest and most perfect class were formed, and men now have an opportunity to join them and satisfy that craving which they say is a part of their nature, and establish those relations they claim are necessary to temporal success. But alas—considering the total number of Catholic men—how poorly are these societies supported!

It was said by the persecutors of our earlier brethren in the Faith, that their love for one another was extraordinary. This was manifested in all the mutual relations. The same must be said of Catholics today, though, unfortunately, not in the same degree. However, if all the members of our Church will do their share of charity toward one another, establish such mutual relations as will increase and nourish it, and lend their aid to the different activities of the Church, it will be but a short time before the marks of neglect, now existing in this respect, will be wiped away.

THE WAGES OF SIN

The Catholic Church professes her faith in hell in the Athanasian Creed: "They that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire." This truth has been repeatedly defined by the Church. We find it in the profession of faith made in the second council of Lyons and the decree of Florence: "The souls of those who depart in mortal sin, or only in original sin, go down immediately into hell, to be visited, however, with unequal punishments."

The Church has not defined what constitutes the pains of hell. Her full doctrine may be summed up in the statement that there is a hell, that its punishments consist of separation from God, to which are added pain or sense, and these sufferings are eternal. These propositions are evident to any one who believes in the Holy Scripture. The eternity of hell is taught as explicitly as its existence. The Prophets, the Evangelists and the Epistles of Saint Paul give eloquent evidence. Whenever Christ and His Apostles speak of hell, they presume the knowledge of its existence. Time and again we read that the fire will not be extinguished, that the worm will not die, that the wicked shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. In Saint Matthew we read the word that the Judge of the living and the dead will speak to the wicked: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire." In Saint Mark we read of those who have been lost: "Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. It is better for thee to enter into life maimed than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire." Again we read in the same Gospel: "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost shall never be guilty of an everlasting sin." Saint Paul writes to the Corinthians: "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers shall possess the kingdom of God." To the Thessalonians he writes: "Who shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction from the face of the Lord." The Apostle Jude says: "To whom the storm of darkness is reserved for ever." It would be impossible to gain the clear sense of these sacred texts. As Oxenham says in his Catholic Eschatology: "If Christ had intended to teach the doctrine of eternal punishment, could he possibly have taught it in any plainer or more direct terms? If he did not intend to teach it, could he possibly have chosen a language more certain to mislead as the unbroken experience of eighteen centuries proves that it always has misled the immense multitude of His disciples?"

There must be some proportion between the gravity of sin and the severity of punishment. We know that God does not always punish sin in this world. We must believe that He will punish it after death. Divine wisdom cannot permit that the whole social and moral order be menaced. If men were fully convinced that they need fear no punishment after death the whole order of the world would be demoralized. If there be no retribution beyond that which we see around us, then we must believe that God is extremely indifferent to good and evil. The human race from the beginning has always been their notions of the future state, that death is only the end of the period of probation and they believed that the moment of death was the most sharply defined incident of life. It is true that God is infinitely merciful, but He is infinitely just. No one is cast into hell unless he has fully and entirely deserved it. It is singular that persons who believe that an eternity of happiness awaits those who lead good lives can not see by the same logic that there must be punishment of evil as the natural counterpart

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of the reward of virtue. It is impossible to believe that mankind has universally erred in regard to the fundamental question of their destiny. It is repugnant to nature and to the wisdom of the Creator to imagine that all men should have fallen into the same error. It would be a sad commentary on the efficiency of the reason that God has given to us. It may be noted that those who run counter to the morally universal conviction of the human race and deny the existence of hell are for the most part the very same men who deny the existence of God.—Catholic Universe.

THE DAILY VISIT

The average human being is of a more or less friendly nature. Ethics tell us that Man is a social animal, that is, he tends towards fellowship with others. He likes company and he delights in the association of those whom he loves. It is not easy, in spite of poets and philosophers, to find real friends in every sense of that amused term. Some are less than high, while others are less than one-half of one per cent. true. Man, however, seeks to be with his fellows for the mere pleasure of their society.

There is one Friend whom many neglect. He is a Man of power. None other like Him exists. The efforts of human force and genius, the achievements of science and the wonders of Nature in general are to Him but the merest trifles. He knows all things; mind reading is but a farce, for He sees deep down into the most hidden secrets of the soul. It is not necessary to make use of social veneer when speaking to Him, for He knows what we are about to do and say even before we have formulated the idea.

This Friend does not reside in a far-off country. It does not require a long journey or great expense or feverish preparations to visit Him. In fact, he lives in our midst. He makes His constant abode with us. We know His address and His hours for callers. Moreover, He is anxious to entertain; and what a royal Entertainer He is! No talk of the weather or literature or the



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vagaries of science or local or national gossip. He speaks to the heart, just as a bosom friend. He talks to us of those things that concern us most intimately: our weakness in certain matters; our anxiety regarding ourselves or a relative or friend; our aims at success and the hurt we received from others; the good we should like to do for this or that person, and the injustice inflicted upon us by some wandering Judas. Oh, He communes with us in a manner that leaves us strong and sweet and courageous.

This Friend years for a daily call from us. He longs to have us drop in for a few minutes to see Him. A little visit on our way to or from our homes means so much to Him and unspeakably more to us. It is not a question of formal attendance at a definite function; it is the little kindly visit that proves the caliber of genuine friendship, for it is entirely voluntary. A few churches have a goodly number of

such daily visitors; while others, perhaps the majority, are used once a week when the fear of God sends multitudes to hear Mass. During the other six days the Royal Friend in the Tabernacle waits patiently for a thoughtful subject to call and offer his respects. Surely the patience of Jesus Christ is infinite. —Catholic Bulletin.

To speak of oneself is not less difficult than walking on a tight-rope; one must have great counterpoises to avoid falling, and marvelous circumspection not to put one's foot on it.—St. Francis de Sales.

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