

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

Rev. F. P. HICKS, O. S. B. TWENTY FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FREE WILL "And he would not." (Matt. xviii, 30.)

We are creatures of God. Everything we have is from Him. On Him are we dependent for every breath we draw. And yet in the midst of all this frailty and utter dependency God has planted in us a free and independent power—our will. God gives us this power, and then even the Almighty cannot force it. It is free to choose or reject: it is free to turn to God and serve Him, or become a rebel. Our free will has the power of meriting or of sinning. God's grace is never wanting to us, but it is powerless to save us unless we will.

And sinful man can allow this will to become blinded and headstrong and perverse. It is often, then, our own greatest enemy. Mark in the Gospel how this servant, whom his master had forgiven, was called to the pleading of his fellow-servant, was blind to his own interest, risked his master's certain anger, and yet "he would not." His will had got the mastery over his heart, his intellect, and his memory, for how soon he had forgotten his own misery, his prayer for mercy, and his master's kindness! So his will had its way, and brought him to ruin.

It is our own fault if we allow our will to be a tyrant over us, therefore sin is essentially our own. Whether it is by thought, word, or deed that we commit a willful, deliberate sin, there is no excuse or palliation; our will consented, wished it, would have it, and the sin is our own. At our judgment both our Angel Guardian and Satan the accuser will agree in one thing—in ascribing the guilt of every sin to our own free will. We would, or we would not.

Exemplify our own sins—unchristianity, avarice, drink, bad thoughts and the sins against God. The essence of all their sinfulness is in our will—we would not. For instance, our brother has offended us, we are bitter against him. Time after time, when we wake in the night, when we try to say our prayers, when we enter into the Sacred Presence of Jesus on the Altar, the words of our Blessed Lord constantly recur: "But I say to you, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you," (Matt. v, 44). And how many times we would not!

And the greed of money, the envy of others when they grow rich, the anxiety about it that chokes all other thoughts and aspirations in our soul. We hear the voice: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee," (Luke xii, 20). But our will clings to the love of money! Give it up? We would not.

And one sin, drink, instead of hardening our will, makes it such a weak, irresolute, senseless thing that it cannot resolve, cannot even try to give up the evil. And yet, "he would not" is at the root of this evil too: he would not as long as he could, and now he is its slave, and he could not.

And what company the will chooses for its intimates: Bad thoughts and evil desires run riot in many a soul. At first they are loathed, and the soul shudders to have them for a friend. And after a time the will, that should aspire to heaven, has given itself up to them, and though conscience has often bidden it to cast them out, it would not.

And as regards the sins against God, how hard it is that the Almighty should be offended by that implanted in our soul that we might merit heaven. Instead of our own will adhering to God in faith, it makes idols of other things, and sets them up for gods. Instead of our will rejoicing in the blessed hope of God's goodness and the promises to come, it banishes the thought of heaven, and centres all its hope in the pleasures and follies, and vanities of life. And our will can rob God of that which He justly claims, to be loved above all things, and add to the injustice by the insult of preferring such common, vile, and sinful things to God—the holy, the loving God.

This is whether our wills are tending, but, please God, they have not been so utterly turned against Him as yet. But still there is something that each one of us is unwilling to do or to give up for the love of God. We all have some weakness, and the Evil One is planning and plotting about it. That unwillingness—that "he would not"—will work our ruin if we let it have its way. My dear brethren, we can each put our finger on the very spot at once. Let us not be cowards and shrink it and put it off to another time. Let us own it now, humbly and sorrowfully before God. Many a time His grace has pleaded with us to give it up, to break with it, to make an effort worthy of God's acceptance, and we would not. Whatever it is, is it worth while to cling to it and forfeit Heaven? to cling to spite and hatred because we were a little while to cling to miserable money, perhaps unjustly gained and wickedly used; to cling to an evil companion, how we shall hate each other for all eternity if we both are lost! to cling to anything that the remorseless hand of death may soon snatch from us; to cling to any neglect of God in prayers, at Mass, at Holy Communion, when soon we shall have to own Him Lord and

Master. Yes, our will has it in its power that we shall own Him Lord and Master joyfully with the Saints in heaven, or in anguish and remorse in the unquenchable torments of the lost.

Let us turn to God now and offer Him the free will that He has given us. Let us offer it as a sacrifice to Him. It is all we have. Let us unite it to His Blessed Will, and pray for the grace that all the endeavour and joy of our will may be in seeking the good pleasure and glory of God.

ARCHBISHOP IRELAND ON THE ROSARY

Every Catholic should carry with him his beads. It exacts but slender room in the folds of our garb. It is a mystic charm, of itself bringing down upon the bearer the blessing of God, as it already has brought down upon itself the blessing of the Church. It is a symbol of your faith. He is surely the Catholic with whom the beads is found. An accident may befall you where you are the stranger. The question is asked—who is he? What the first aid we must bestow? The beads is with you: there is no doubt that you are the Catholic and the priest of the Church must be quickly bidden nigh unto you. Carry with you the beads, even if you do not repeat the prayers which its use calls for. Carry with you the beads: it is the livery of Mary, by itself a claim to her love and intercession. Carry with you your beads; in it is the invitation, which you will not always repel, to take into your fingers and say, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee."

Repeat the Apostles Creed, the solemn formula of Christian faith; repeat the prayer taught by Jesus Himself—"Our Father Who art in Heaven;" rehearse in mental glance the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Redemption; salute ten times over the Virgin of Nazareth; crave ten times over her prayers, meanwhile, to fasten attention the more closely to the realities you are contemplating, pass through your fingers the grains of the beads upon which previously the blessing of the Church has descended—you are reciting the Rosary.

The month of October is the month of the Rosary—the month during which the devotion of the Rosary, that should be ours the year throughout, will be ours in a manner more special, more impressive. Let us keep holy the month of the Rosary. In your parish church, every evening the Rosary is publicly recited. Let us, as many as easily may, attend this sacred exercise. Let those who are held away from the church repeat the Rosary in the family home—the father leading; if not the father, the mother; if not the mother, the child. If even this much cannot be done, let each Catholic privately, by himself, say the Rosary at some moment of the day, or night, quietly, unostentatiously, but always piously. This for the month of October; and this, I exhort you, throughout the entire year.

Off and oft care and sorrow weigh heavily on us; why not seek to lighten the burden by securing to ourselves the intercession of Mary? Off and oft the remembrance of our sins frightens us; why not ask through Mary that for her sake, if not for ours, those sins be forgiven? Off and oft in our journey through the day's labors we are sad and lonely; why not walk with the thought of Mary in our mind, with the name of Mary on our lips, with the hand of Mary fondly resting upon our forehead? This, for the day that is. But let us not forget that the moment is coming—sure to come for all—when perhaps we shall be too feeble to pray, when, nevertheless, there is need of prayer as never before—the hour of our death. Then we may not be able to pray; yet how much we should wish that then we could say, "Holy Mary, pray for us."

While now our lips may move and our hearts may throbb, let us say, again and again, the sweet words, "Holy Mary, pray for us now and at the hour of death." And so when the hour of death does come, whether we ourselves pray or not, whether those around us pray or not, the prayers of days gone by will be remembered: Mary will pray for us, and in the answer to the prayer of Mary, Jesus will bestow upon us in richly flowing streams the mercies of Bethlehem and of Calvary.—The Monitor.

PRACTICAL CATHOLICITY

If our country is ever to become Catholic—and the more we love it the more ardently do we desire this consummation—it will be due in no small measure to the example of devout practical Catholics whose faith shines out in their works; to those who have learned their faith in a Catholic home and a Catholic school, who have made it more intelligent and solid by good reading and study, who have not exposed themselves or their children to the disastrous consequences of mixed marriages, who have not permitted money or position or honor to swerve them in the least from the full performance of the duties of their faith.

Such Catholics are the staunch exponents of the teachings of Christ and His Church, and torch-bearers to those who wander in the darkness of heresy or unbelief. Protestantism is visibly crumbling. It has no longer the appearance of conservatism that at one time made certain forms of it—Episcopalian-

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ism, for instance—so rich in imaginative suggestion and esthetic stimulation to the cultivated and discriminating mind. It is gradually, as discerning observers have long since acknowledged, succumbing to those influences of disintegration which shall destroy it, leaving it impotent.

If the drift of modern thought continues in its present direction, the Catholic Church within the next half century will be the only sanctuary where the believing soul can find refuge and solace. The example of the practical and pious Catholic will help to attract such souls to the Church which reveals itself as the great social savior, the guardian of the family, the inspirer of the finest philanthropy, the foster mother of art, the friend of true freedom, the charter of a national democracy.—Southern Messenger, San Antonio.

"WE HAVE SHED ALL OUR TEARS"

"There is a terrible significance in the words, 'We have shed all our tears,'" remarks Noelle Roger, the author of a poignant little book called "The Victims' Return," in which she describes the pitiful state of the people who had been "evacuated" from the occupied districts of France, and first received humane treatment from the kind nuns of Switzerland. Typical of many tales she heard from the refugees is this account of an old peasant woman of Dompierre-au-Bois gave of incidents that happened in the village during the German occupation:

"They [the Germans] put the whole lot of us in the church, and while we were there, pillaged all our houses one after the other. They threatened to shoot us, and for two days we believed that they were coming to fetch us out to execution, every time the door opened. Some of the women fainted through fright. . . . A shell burst in the church. Then it seemed as if one could not see properly any longer. Everybody rushed out and then went back again. . . . We saw the dead and wounded—twenty two dead and seventeen wounded." It was a terrible scene: families wiped out; a woman lying dead with her six-week-old baby in her arms; another killed while suckling her child, which was found alive. . . . The most severely wounded were left in the church among the dead bodies till the following day. From the uninjured altar the statue of the Virgin looked down on this hecatomb of women, children and old men. "My poor wife kept asking for water," said an old man, "but I was not allowed to take her any, and she died thirty-six hours later."

To those innocent sufferers from the horrors of the German invasion seem henceforward like ordinary happenings. The souls of the citizens of Lille, too, are likely to be almost as deeply seared by the memory of the present war as are those of the poor peasants of Dompierre-au-Bois. For in the current Atlantic Monthly Vernon Kellogg, who was in France in the spring of 1916, thus describes the ruthless "Lille deportations":

"The seizures were made during the successive days and nights of Holy Week [1916] by officers accompanied by squads of soldiers. Mostly they came to the houses at night, especially in the last hours before dawn. They did not take whole families. They did worse. They tore away the fathers alone, or the

older sons and daughters, mothers, children of fifteen and up, girls as well as boys: one from this family, two from that, three from another, and so on. They tore families apart, they wrecked families. And with one and a half hour's notice they carried off their selected slaves."

"Twenty thousand were taken from families of all grades, piled into cattle trains and transported from their homes to filthy barracks hastily flung up in the concentration camps and fields of the southern districts. There they were put to work, strong and frail, workman and office-clerk, sturdy woman and frail girl, adolescent youth and child of fifteen, from dawn till dark, with spade and hoe and cart, in the fields of France—to make German crops; housed together at night promiscuously, like cattle in long sheds; worked by day in groups under overseers, not with whips, but with loaded guns, with fixed bayonets."

No count one of the powerful motives that is giving such irresistible vigor to the attacks of the American troops or the western front is a grim determination in the heart of every soldier there, that as far as in him lies this War will end with such an overwhelming defeat for Germany that the smiling fields, peaceful villages and busy towns of France and Belgium will never be ravaged again by the Kaiser's pitiless military despotism. When the Allies dictate the terms of peace in Berlin, within a year from now, as we hope, they should exact from the crushed and humiliated autocracy that brought on this War the fullest reparation possible for all the pain, sorrow, and misery that the blameless people of Belgium and France have suffered at the hands of the invader.—America.

THE CHAPLAIN OF THE 69TH

When the famous Sixty-ninth Regiment of the New York National Guard (renamed the One Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry when it entered the federal service) went to France with the Rainbow Division every one who knew its chaplain, the Rev. Francis P. Duffy, said: "When the boys get into the fight we'll hear wonderful things of Father Duffy." And we have heard wonderful things of him. It isn't an exaggeration to say that he is today one of the most heroic American figures of the Great War. No sooner had the Sixty-ninth boys arrived in France than the name came home that Father Duffy was the most popular man in the regiment. He was always looking after the welfare of every one, no matter whether he was Catholic, Protestant or Jew—for the one time exclusively Irish Catholic character of the regiment had been changed somewhat by the taking in of many hundreds of men from other units to bring this regiment and all other National Guard regiments up to war strength of over 3,000 men. But when the Sixty-ninth boys went into the fight in earnest and acquitted themselves as befitted members of the noble old regiment then it was that Father Duffy rose to heroic heights. Every newspaper correspondent has sung his praises, and the boys—Catholics, Protestants and Jews—when they have always speak in fonder terms of Father Duffy. General Pershing, the commander of all the American forces in France, is the latest to laud Father Duffy, when awarding the Distinguished Service Cross to him. Elsewhere in our news columns we tell the story. Here we shall quote an editorial tribute to Father Duffy from the New York Times of last Monday:

"There are heroes and heroes: some who achieve fame in hot blood, in a fine frenzy winning their laurels, others who have heroism thrust upon them in the imminent deadly breach, for life is dear; but rarer is the hero whose flame of valor burns luminously, steadily, inspiringly, whenever death confronts men and that is need of the stout heart and the soul that loves his kind. Such a hero is Father Duffy, chaplain of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth, to whom General Pershing has awarded the Distinguished Service Cross."

Father Duffy is the hero of a regiment of which heroism is always expected. Chaplain and non-combatant, he devoted himself, when it crossed the Oureq on July 28 in a hell of fire, to bringing in the wounded as well as to bandaging the last words of the dying, oblivious of danger, thinking only of those in danger, tireless in helpfulness, spending his strength in good deeds—lion hearted tender Father Duffy! In making the award, which so many brave soldiers covet, General Pershing said of the chaplain's work on the three terrible days from July 28 to 31:

Despite constant and severe bombardment with shells and aerial bombs he continued to circulate in and about the two aid stations and hospitals, creating an atmosphere of cheerfulness and confidence by his courageous and inspiring example."

Long before the decoration was bestowed upon Father Duffy the men of the old Sixty-ninth wanted to have his praises sung, so that New York should be as proud of their hero as they were, but a vigilant censor deleted his name from the despatches. Of what avail? The censor may have done his duty as he saw it, but now all America, and England, too, no doubt, is ringing with the story of how Francis P. Duffy did his duty, as he loved to do

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publicity will result in the appointment of some Catholic representative on the Palestine Relief Board, but, unfortunately, this body is a Protestant organization, and the only remedy is for Catholics to send funds for their own people to the Catholic missionaries, direct.

HEROISM OF CHAPLAIN UNDER FIRE

In the letters that come from the front are so many pathetic and heroic traits that one is inclined after more than three years' war, to consider them as a matter of course. Tragedy has lost its element of novelty, and we have grown used to incidents that in less strenuous times would have impressed us deeply. The following anecdote has been related by the officer who witnessed it, and who in fact was, when the incident took place, in command of an important post, a fort in the region of Verdun, that the Germans attacked incessantly. From their entrenched position behind the half destroyed outworks the defenders of Verdun saw a young lieutenant, a mere boy, who either because he did not realize the situation or else had been impelled by the rashness of youth, was quietly crossing a particularly dangerous zone, swept by the German shells and bullets. One of these struck the lad, who fell, whereupon the military chaplain solicited the officer's permission to go to him. This meant certain death, and the leave was impatiently refused; but the chaplain, took leave to be repulsed. He continued to entreat his chief, who ended by giving way; he then started on his errand of charity, but he too was struck, probably by the same marksmen. His body lay at no great distance from the fort, and, to the officer's surprise, another soldier, a curé, was seen to make for the spot. With deep reverence, leisurely, as if performing a sacred rite, he bent over the dead chaplain, took from his breast the "custode," containing several consecrated Hosts, that were touched by the enemy's bullets; he wore piercing the heart of the priest had wounded the Sacred Hosts. "With a look of beatitude," the soldier communicated himself. "He had the face of an ecstatic," said the admiring chief.—The Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.

THE JERUSALEM PATRIARCH APPEALS FOR FUNDS

A serious state of things is disclosed in Palestine by the appeal made to Cardinal Logue and the faithful of Ireland from the Catholic Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem, through his Vicar General. The latter writes to say that not only are large sums of money for relief of the sufferers entirely in the hands of Protestants, but they are being used by the latter for proselytizing purposes. Food and clothing are be-



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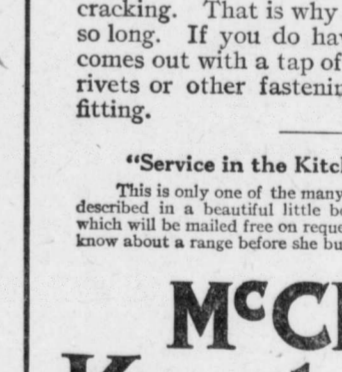
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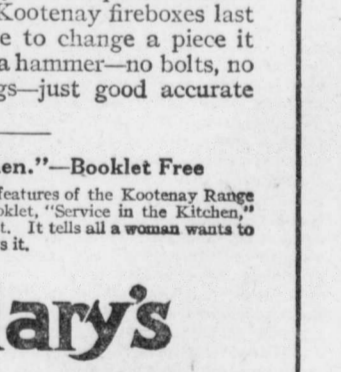
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