

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D. SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

THE GOODNESS OF GOD But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law; that He might redeem them who were under the law, that the right might receive the adoption of sons. (Gal. iv., 4.)

How good God is! He made man out of His mere goodness. Man failed to respect the attributes of his Maker and offered a great insult to Him. His goodness again was manifested in this noblest of earthly creatures. In His justice He was bound to punish man and his posterity for the sin committed against Him; but He laid the plans for a new means of redemption. What true and great goodness! In the face of man's ingratitude, He shows His love and concern for him.

This redemption was to be worked not by man only, but by One who was at the same time God and man—by His own Divine Son, Jesus Christ. The offense committed against God could not have been fully atoned for by mere man. How helpless, therefore, was man after he did the wrongful deed in the Garden of Paradise! God had pity on him, however, and announced to him in a prophetic way that "in the fulness of time" One would appear upon earth who would offer Him a satisfaction in proportion to the offense committed against His own divine majesty. How incomprehensibly great the wisdom and goodness of God! His favors and benefits to man are without number. His solicitude is almost inexplicable.

This Saviour came upon earth and set man an example to follow. He suffered and died a cruel death upon an infamous gibbet. By this horrible end He consummated the great work of Redemption. Man, however, was not left free of obligations. He is a rational being, and hence accountable to his Maker for his every human act. What Christ accomplished, man must apply to himself. Christ made the means for doing so comparatively easy for him. He founded a Church, the head of which possesses the keys to His eternal kingdom. He instituted the sacraments, which are so many channels through which God's grace may flow into man's soul. All the merits He gained for man by His passion and death, may come to him through this Church. She will be his abiding guide and companion if he remains faithful to her. She follows him from the cradle to the grave, strengthening him, encouraging him, correcting him, enriching him, and finally saving him. All she demands of him is respect, love, and obedience. These she has an inherent right to ask of man.

What more could God in His goodness have done for the human race! How ungrateful is man in the face of it all! It is true that many are serving God, and showing a grateful appreciation for His favors to the human race; but, on the other hand, there are many who are not. How few, outside of the true fold, admit the whole truth concerning Him and His Divine Son! How weak is the faith in Christ of so many! They would have a Christ, not the Christ that God has sent, but one to their own liking. As a consequence, the adorable person of our Divine Saviour is no longer treated with the respect due Him. He is analyzed, as it were, and anything found in Him not suited to their taste is eliminated. What unwise proceedings! Christ is what He is. The opinion, dislike, and wickedness of man will not change Him. He is "Jesus Christ yesterday and today, and the same forever."

Instead of submitting to the truth, and accepting Christ whole and entire, men, in their pride and other moral weaknesses, will try to mold Him to fit in with modern methods. Were these demands just, He would answer them. But laden as many are with injustice, and wearing but a semblance of truth, He who is the "Way, the Truth and the Life," can not submit to the world's demands unless they partake of His truth and wisdom.

There is, however, a class of people who believe in Christ in His fulness and entirety. These are the faithful members of the Catholic Church. In their hearts they believe, and with their lips they profess, that Christ is the Saviour of mankind, the real Son of God, true God and true man. How much joy, humanly speaking, must the allegiance and fidelity of these bring to the Heart of Jesus! He sees that, at least in them, His work, His sufferings, and His death have had a beneficial effect. How much He must love to dwell in their midst and to come into their individual hearts! For them He is the Redeemer. They have become His adopted children. They are heirs to a share in His kingdom.

Oh, how blessed are these! They are solving life's problem correctly. For this their merit will be great. For the mortification they suffer now they will be given a special share in the eternal delights of the world beyond the grave. For their courage in facing a mocking, unbelieving, and often malicious element among men, they will be given an extraordinarily clear vision of God and His kingdom. The angels and saints, no doubt, will give them special honor for their courageous and victorious fight.

Let us continue to give Christ the homage, faith, and love that is due Him. Anything we shall do for Him will be rewarded. We can become His chosen children. With us He will love to dwell. His delight is to be with the children of men; His special delight to be with His faithful children. Nor will He come alone. The True God will dwell in our midst and abide with us. "If any man love Me, My Father will love him, and We will come to him and take up Our abode with him."

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AS SANTA CLAUS DRAWS NIGH

There's somethin' I can scarce explain a pullin' me today, A-tuggin' at my heart strings in a tender kind of way, And I seem to hear a voice, kind of gentle-like and low, Sayin', "Come, there's someone waitin' and it's time for you to go."

I have roamed the streets in sadness, and I've mingled with the throng, Tryin' hard to join the laughter, but somehow there's somethin' wrong; I have gazed into the wine glass, hopin' thus to drown my sighs, But I saw within its sparkle just two tender, pleadin' eyes.

And I poured it out untasted, gloatin' o'er it as it ran, Feelin' stronger for the conflict that had made me more a man; But the tuggin' will not leave me, and still the voice I hear, Pleadin' gently with the cadence of a softly fallin' tear

Oh, I know the folks are happy, and that Christmas is at hand, Yet I'm feelin' like an alien in a strange and foreign land; And it ain't the town nor people—it's the voice within my heart, That's a beggin' me to listen and a callin' me apart.

I can hear it softly sighin', like the coo' of a dove, And it's filled to overflowin' with the tenderest kind of love, And I long to up and answer, and to shout across the world, 'Till it echoes back my message, "I am comin', little girl."

That's the reason, too, I'm thinkin', why I'm lonesome like and sad, And why Christmas joys approachin' somehow fail to make me glad, 'Cause I just keep on a list'nin' to that voice so sweet and low, Sayin', "Come—there's someone waitin' and it's time for you to go."

—ALLEN GRIFFIN JOHNSON

AT THE MANGER

The stable-door is very low, And mean and small—stoop down, proud head! Nor dare, with thought of self, to go into that humble, roadside shed.

No light save that of starlit skies, And Joseph's lantern, old and dim, The Babe within the manger lies, While Mary, kneeling, worships Him.

The poor, dumb beasts, tho' void of faith And reason, stare at Him with awe; Upon His face their soft, warm breath Is blown across the coarse, sweet straw.

And Joseph near the manger kneels, And clasps his roughened hands in prayer; And looking on the Infant, feels That God Omnipotent is there.

Dear Mary! ere the shepherd brings His bleating lambskins through the cold; And ere they come, the Eastern kings, With frankincense and myrrh and gold,—

Oh! may we, by Saint Joseph led, Not formally, nor as a stranger, But keeping close to Jesus, spread Our Christmas gifts before the manger.

And may the love we proffer there Be pure as shepherd's offerings: More precious than the treasures rare Reserved for Oriental kings.

And when the world's rude Bethlehem Shall on thy dear ones close the door, Oh! may our hearts make room for them, And Christ therein be born once more!

—ELEANOR C. DONNELLY

"HYMN ON THE NATIVITY"

It snowed this cold and silent night, The starry world seemed glorious bright, One benedictus star gave light till day, To guide the shepherds' wondrous way.

An humble stable bathed in light A King did shelter on that night, A Babe Monarch, sweet and fair, With Angels hovering in the air.

The Mother watched with eyes of love Her Babe Divine, from Heav'n above, The three Kings came—their homage given, Left there the Babe—their sins all shrun.

—RITA McMARTIN

Composed by a child of fifteen, being her first attempt at verse, which is here given without any correction.—Rita's Teacher.

THE CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

"We must look to Christmas as the festival of the children," says Cardinal Manning. It is so because it is the festival of the Child Jesus—it is the festival of home, of father, mother, and little ones. And at this Christmas time all who have children ought to lay to heart the responsibility allotted them in respect to them. They were the children of fathers and mothers by nature, but they were the children of God by adoption and grace. Let parents take care how they bring up their children. Let them not be lured by any of the attractions of great intellectual culture to send their sons and daughters out of the light of faith which, turned upon them, made them disciples of Jesus Christ. Then they had duties to perform to their homes. They ought to take account of them on Christmas day. How had they ruled over their households? And had the light of faith shone in their homes? Had fathers lived with their children as if they were endeavoring to bring them up as St. Joseph brought up the Child Jesus? Had mother endeavored to imitate the Blessed Virgin in her love, care, and tender watchfulness over the children committed to them. There were others besides their children in their households, who served them and to whom they owe duties of love and care, because servants in their houses were just as if they were the children of the family. Did they treat their servants with kindness, generosity, with due watchfulness and care for their moral welfare? Did they do all they could to enable their servants to serve God? Did they afford them time to go to divine services? Did they, when they sat down to their regular meals, ask God's blessing upon them and give thanks for them?

That was the practice of the forefathers when the light of the Incarnation spread its brightness over the land; but now, unhappily, "There is a darkness over the land and a mist over the people."

DIVINE GRACE

MEANING OF GRACE

The word "grace" signifies in general, a gift, a favor, a benefit of pure liberality, which is in no manner due us. God grants us some for this life, as health, use of reason, beauty, strength, temporal goods, etc. In the sense, however, in which we here understand the term "grace," it is a supernatural gift of God, freely bestowed upon us through the merits of Jesus Christ, for our salvation. It is something that God, out of His bounty, showers upon us; something to which we have no right whatever; something for the salvation of the soul. It may be likened to the ether, the invisible fluid, that ceases our investigations but is known by its effects; it is an invisible influx of God upon our souls; it surrounds us, fills our lives, stimulates us to action; it is a breathing, a gentle wind of persuasion which we can reject.

ACTUAL GRACE

There are two kinds of God's grace. One is called Actual Grace, the other Habitual or Sanctifying Grace. Actual Grace is a transient movement of supernatural influence, which enlightens the understanding, and strengthens the will, directing us towards some good action and helping us in its performance. It is referred to as actual grace since it gives us the power to produce acts. It is a transitory help to perform some special act or virtue. It may come to the sinner urging him to repent, it may come to the saint urging him to become better. Thus a thought comes to pray to God, to do some work for God, for our neighbor, these are actual graces, gifts of God to us, for our salvation.

HABITUAL OR SANCTIFYING GRACE

Besides Actual Grace, the transient help to do good and avoid evil, there is another kind of grace, that is referred to as Habitual or Sanctifying Grace. This is a supernatural gift of God that permanently adheres in the soul, by which one is immediately and formally made partaker of God, the adopted son of God, capable of eliciting works meritorious of eternal life. As Actual Grace signifies a passing gift, Habitual Grace means a permanent gift, lost only by mortal sin, it is a State of Grace, or a permanent quality infused into the soul by God, vesting it like a garment.

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NECESSITY OF ACTUAL GRACES

While we may be inclined to consider unduly the dignity of our nature as surpassing all other creatures of this lower world, we should not forget the weakness of the human reason and the human will. Our natural knowledge falls short of the higher state which God calls man to enter, natural knowledge is insufficient. "No man can come to Me, except the Father Who hath sent Me, draw him." (Jo. vi., 44). "Without Me you can do nothing" (Jo. xv., 5). "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. iii., 5).

The teaching of the Church on the necessity of actual graces is, that without it we can neither commence, nor continue, nor achieve any salutary work—that is, any work proportioned to our salvation. In a state of pure nature, that is without supernatural gifts, and without sin or the wounds inflicted by sin, man by his natural strength would be able to perform all actions proportioned to his nature, but he could not wish and perform any supernatural good. Without grace, man is able to execute some moral good of the natural order, to love God as the Author of nature, to overcome slight temptations. Without grace man is unable to do anything that will lead him to eternal life, to persevere in good, to observe all the precepts of the natural law, to love God with a perfect love, to overcome grave temptations. This shows the necessity of actual graces.

DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL GRACES

Since we are so helpless in the supernatural order, and since God has died for all, and wishes all to be saved, it follows that God offers to all the necessary grace for their salvation. This is the teaching of the Church, also for sinners, since God speaking of sinners says, "As I live saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek. xxxiii., 11).

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The first effect of Habitual Grace is that it remits the guilt and the eternal punishment of sin. Not merely is sin wiped out, eradicated, but the inner man is so renovated that from being an enemy of God, he becomes a friend of God. Sins are not merely ignored, or overlooked, or covered, they are actually removed. "As far as the East is from the West, so hath He removed our iniquities from us" (Ps. cii., 12). This effect of justification and sanctification does not proceed from repentance; no, this action which destroys the virulent activity of sin in our souls, is supernatural and beyond all our power. Grace and sin are incompatible. Either we are in the state of mortal sin, or we are in the State of Grace.

The second effect of Habitual Grace, is that besides making us just and holy in the sight of God, it renders our acts worthy of reward. It makes the good works, performed in the service of God, deserve a supernatural recompense.

MEANS OF OBTAINING GRACE

The principal means by which we can obtain this grace of God are through the seven Sacraments and through prayer. These will form the subject matter of our instruction for the coming year. Truly precious are these supernatural gifts of God. They are gentle whisperings, and the terrible part is that by reason of our free will we can refuse to accept them; we can spurn them. To abuse God's grace is to endanger our salvation. He who has the warning to abandon evil, no matter how this comes, by a sermon, by sickness, etc., he who has the inspiration to lead a good life and refuse, will have to account for this to God. "To offer that grace it cost the blood of Jesus Christ. And the one who abuses it really tramples upon the blood of the Saviour. Grace, once gone, like time, never returns, and may in the end will be our undoing." "He that condemneth small things, shall fall little by little."—The Tablet.

FIND RELIC OF BISHOP LOST IN SHIPWRECK

APPEARS TO BE BREVIAIRY OF MGR. JALABERT, LEADER IN AFRICAN MISSIONS

A relic has just been found which seemingly testifies to some of the activities and projects which were in the mind of the late Rev. Mgr. Jalabert, Missionary Bishop of Dakar, a leader in the African missions, who with thirteen of his fellow apostles, perished in a shipwreck off the French coast.

The relic appeared to be a Breviary, though it was so water soaked that its pages formed a jelly like substance. In the book was found a plan of the future cathedral of Dakar. There were also found pictures and prayers written out by hand. On the binding was printed the name which thrilled the fingers—Mgr. Jalabert.

The catastrophes in which the Bishop and his companions perished occurred last January. They were members of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost. The book was found recently by a fisherman near the Sables d'Olonne, on the western coast of France. The tide had carried the relic to land. The discovery was made not far from the place where the vessel went down. The book is said to be all that remained of Mgr. Jalabert's worldly possessions, nothing having escaped from the wreck.—The Pilot.

To the one who thinks clearly, truth never grows old. It is eternal in its clear-voiced demands. Certain truths, to be sure, may lose their appeal to us. At such times we would do well to inquire whether our hearing has not become dull or our sight dim through disobedience.

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