

FIVE-MINUTE SERMONS.

Fourth Sunday After Epiphany.

TAKING COURAGE.

Sometimes, my brethren, we feel discouraged because we have not kept our good resolutions, and are even ready to say it is better not to make any at all, so often do we break them. I have no doubt there are some listening to me who began the new year courageously and with some sincere promises to God of leading a good life, and have already slipped back into the bad old ways; and now they say, 'What was the matter with my good resolutions? I did not mean to lie to God, yet I have not kept my word with Him; I have relapsed: I am as bad as I was before, maybe I am worse. What, then, was the matter with my good resolutions?'

Now, in considering this question let us not get into a panic. God knows us just as we are, and far better than we know ourselves. Therefore He is not so cruel as to hold us strictly to all our promises. 'God is true and every man a liar,' says Holy Writ, and our experience of human nature demonstrates that although we are honestly determined to tell the truth, and do tell it, when we promise to God to behave ourselves properly, yet we know very well that in a moment of weakness we may break down, and that is understood when we make our promise. I remember reading of St. Philip Neri that sometimes on waking in the morning he would say, 'O Lord, keep thy hand on Philip to-day or he will betray Thee.'

Hence it is a great folly to say, 'I do not want to make a promise for fear I could not keep it.' That would be good sense if you were going to swear to your promise, or if you were to make a vow. But a promise to attend Sunday Mass, to keep out of saloons, to stop stealing, to be more good natured at home, and the like is a very different matter. In such cases we must shut our eyes and go ahead, and meantime pray hard for God's assistance.

There is such a thing as being too fidgety about the future, looking back too far into it or imagining temptations not likely to come up. Once there was an army officer who led an edifying life, and who came to a priest of his acquaintance and informed him that he was in great distress, and feared that he could not persevere. 'What is the matter?' said the priest. 'Why I know that duelling is a deadly mortal sin; yet if I were challenged to a duel I fear that I should not have the virtue to decline the challenge and suffer the disgrace which would be sure to follow.' 'But,' said the priest, 'has any one challenged you or is any one likely to do so?' 'Oh, no! not at all; but—' 'But wait until the temptation comes. You have made up your mind not to commit mortal sin, and when this particular temptation comes God will give you grace to overcome it.'

Do not cast your net too far into the stream: do not be in a hurry to promise to abstain from any particular sin or to do any particular act of virtue for your whole life except in a general way. In a general way you are determined to keep God's law honestly, and firmly determined. As to this or that particular sin, you hate and detest it and have made up your mind against it; whenever the temptation comes you are resolved to resist it.

There are three things about which one should make good resolutions rather than about any others: First, the practice of prayer; second, going to confession and Communion; third, avoiding the occasion of sins. The first two fill our souls with God's grace and the third keeps us out of danger. Put all your good resolutions into company with prayer and monthly, or at least quarterly, Communion; and you will have no great difficulty in pulling through. From month to month is not so long a time to keep straight, and a good confession and a worthy Communion is God's best help. Morning and night prayers are a mark of preparation to eternal life; keep away from bad company and dangerous places, and avoiding bad reading and all other dangerous occasions, has very much to do with an innocent life and a happy death.

The Fundamental Difference

The following remarkable passage is from a Protestant paper, the Outlook: 'The syllogism which leads the high churchmen logically to Rome is very simple, and from its conclusion there is no escape. It may be stated thus: The Church is the final authority in matters of faith and practice. The Church has declared that authority to be vested in the Pope. Therefore, the Pope is the final authority in matters of faith and practice. One must deny either the major or the minor premise or accept the conclusion. If he denies the major premise he is a Protestant. If he denies the minor premise he denies the final authority of the historic episcopate, since beyond all question the Roman episcopate is in the line of the historic episcopate. The Episcopal Church has come to the parting of the ways. It cannot permanently remain in that self-contradictory attitude.'

'Five years ago,' says Anga A. Lewis, Ricard, N. Y., 'I had a constant cough, night sweats, was greatly reduced in flesh, and had been given up by my physicians. I began to take Ayer's Cherry Pectoral, and after using two bottles was completely cured.'

THOS. SAHIN, of Elington, says: 'I have removed ten corns from my feet with Holloway's Corn Cure.' Reader, go thou and do likewise.

Mindard's Liniment is the Best.

The Beggar of the Steps of St. Roch.

A TRUE STORY.

A young priest attached to the church of St. Roch, at Paris, in the year 18—, had been in the habit of giving occasional alms to a beggar whom he passed every day as he went into the church. This man used to sit on the steps of the front entrance, and to solicit the charity of the faithful as they passed to and fro. He was old, and his countenance stern and sad. If any one addressed him, he answered briefly and abruptly; nor had his features ever been seen to relax into a smile. He was known as 'old Jacques of the steps of St. Roch'; and none had troubled themselves to enquire into his history or ascertain his origin. The good priest who had frequently relieved him remarked that he was never seen within the church, and endeavored at different times to find out from him whether he indeed neglected his religious duties, or performed them at such times as had escaped his observation; but he always returned evasive answers to his questions, and shut himself up in the deepest reserve. Once or twice the Abbe— had perceived that he wore round his neck a black string, to which was attached a small enamelled cross. When his eyes had fixed itself upon it, Jacques had hastily hid it from sight, and since that day had taken care to keep his poor ragged coat buttoned over it. It so happened that the priest was called away from his post during the winter that followed his first acquaintance with Jacques, and remained absent for some weeks. At his return he missed the beggar from his accustomed place, and when, after a few days, he still did not appear, his charity prompted him to make enquiries about the poor man. He found some difficulty in discovering his abode; but it was at last pointed out to him, his informant adding, at the same time, that, though Jacques was very ill, it was of no use for a priest to visit him, as he had absolutely refused to send for one, and seemed determined to die in sullen, obstinate silence. This account only confirmed the Abbe— in his resolution to seek him out; and as he bent his steps towards the narrow street which had been pointed out to him, he thought of the cross which he had noticed on the old man's bosom, and wondered that one apparently so poor should wear so rich an ornament, or one so irreligious the symbol of our Redemption. After groping up a narrow staircase in the house to which he had been directed, he succeeded in finding the garret in which Jacques was lying. His worn and emaciated appearance, heightened by the progress of disease, had greatly increased since he had last seen him; the dark lines about his eyes and mouth, and the restless twitchings of his limbs, seemed to indicate that life was drawing to a close. There was little furniture in that miserable room; the bed, if bed it could be called, occupied one-half of it; a piece of stained, discolored silk hung against the wall in the shape of a curtain. There seemed no particular reason for this contrivance, which scarcely harmonized with the squalid, neglected aspect of that poor abode. Jacques lifted up his eyes as the Abbe approached, and made a sign of recognition. When the priest kindly addressed him, he held out his hand, and murmured a few words of thanks; but when his visitor, after alluding to his illness, and proposing certain measures for his relief and comfort, proceeded to speak of the preparation every Christian should make for death, and to express a hope that he would avail himself of the means of grace which a merciful God was placing within his reach, the old man's face darkened, the lines about his mouth grew harder, and he exclaimed with impatience that it was all of no use—that he had nothing to say to a priest, and only wished to be left alone.

'You are satisfied, then, to be left in your present state of mind, my dear friend,' the Abbe said with gentleness. 'You feel easy at the prospect of death?'

'Easy! Easy as the damned,' murmured Jacques, with an accent of such despair that it startled his companion.

'You are not an infidel, Jacques; I know you are not; then why will you not die as a Christian? I have observed that you always wear a cross.'

Jacques looked up wildly at these words, and muttered, 'It scorches my breast.'

The Abbe— knelt down by the side of the bed, and with the earnest words that faith and love suggest in such an hour he argued with the dying man. He implored him not to reject his good offices, and if he would not speak to him as a priest, to treat him at least as a friend, and disclose the secret that sealed his lips and withered his heart.

'My secret!' said Jacques. 'Would you hear my secret? It will make your hair stand on end, and cause you to fly from my side with scorn and loathing. Well, be it so: when you know what a wretch you have been pleading with, you will give up the vain attempt to console or bring him to repentance. You will confess that there is no repentance possible for such guilt as mine. Remorse, indeed, there is, but no hope of pardon. Was Judas pardoned?'

'He might have been pardoned, if he had not despaired,' said the Abbe in a low voice.

'Well, I will tell you my story,' exclaimed Jacques; and he lent his head on his hand, fixed his wild expressive eyes on the calm, earnest face of the priest, and spoke as follows:

'I was born on the estates of a nobleman who had been for many years the protector of my family. He took me into his service when I was very young and I had lived some time in his house when the Revolution broke out. He was a kind, generous master, and his wife an angel of goodness. The rich respected and the poor worshipped her. I used often to think, when she knelt in the village church, or visited the sick, or gave alms at the door of the castle, that she was just as good as any of the saints in the calendar. Her two daughters were as good and as beautiful as their mother; and her son, who was but a little fellow at the time I am speaking of, the joy of their hearts.

'Well, the Revolution came, and a strange madness took possession of men's minds. We were told that we were all equal; that masters were tyrants, and kings oppressors. We heard nothing else from morning to night, till we dreamt of riches and freedom, and doing our own will and not that of others, and cursed in silence every duty we had to perform as laborers of our servants. My master was not very eager about public affairs, but he hated new notions, and spoke out in favor of the king and of the Church whenever an opportunity offered, and went on much in his usual way, shooting over his grounds, visiting his neighbors, and little dreaming of the storm that was ready to burst over his head. His wife thought more about it than he did, and we could see that she was longer at her prayers than usual, and there were often traces of tears on her sweet face.

TO BE CONTINUED.

A ROSARY FOR PROTESTANTS.

They at Length Discover the Utility of Such a Devotion.

Dr. Boynton, in the Congregationalist, recognizes the true meaning of the Rosary among Catholics when he says:

'The Rosary is one of those aids to devotion which for nearly or quite one thousand years has been relied on by them as helps to their devotion. The beads, strung by tens, and counted off to mark so many repetitions of the Ave, could hardly fall among the truly devout to lift the thoughts up to at least the blessed among women and to the cause of her peculiar honor in her relation to the Son of God.'

This is certainly a Romeward view for a Protestant, but he does not understand the full meaning of the Rosary. He does not appear to know, as he does not speak of the fifteen subjects of meditation which are associated with the fifteen decades that constitute the Rosary. Take for instance five of these subjects, the five allotted to Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays of the week. They are called the sorrowful mysteries, and are as follows: The agony in the garden, the scourging at the pillar, the crowning with thorns, the carrying of the cross and the death on the cross.

What subjects could be better adapted to excite our devotion and love for our Divine Redeemer or inpire us with a devout and prayerful mood?

Every Catholic who says his beads intelligently and properly meditates on them and the other great mysteries of our redemption allotted to each decade of the Rosary.

When well understood there is no more beautiful and attractive devotion in the Church. It has the advantage also of being common to the learned and the unlearned. It is a book of prayer and meditation which every one can read.

Dr. Boynton asks: 'What may a Protestant have to take the place of the rosary?'

Why should he have anything to take its place? Why not adopt it and use it as Catholics do? It is easily learned—only three prayers and the lesser doxology, that is, the Apostles' Creed, the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory be to the Father; but associated with these are the fifteen mysteries of redemption—subjects of meditation that may occupy the mind, heart and soul for all eternity.

The doctor asks again: 'What form of sacred words shall have more than the same uplifting power over the thoughts? What repetitions, not of the same words so many times, but of varied sentences, each of which shall have the power to induce some holier purpose of some renewal of trust in God?'

What can have a greater uplifting power over our thoughts than to let them dwell on the great and mysterious facts relating to our redemption? On the birth of Christ, His humiliations, sufferings, death and final glorious triumph? Than these nothing can be more conducive to elevation of thought. They are the subject-matter of the whole New Testament. The Rosary is the New Testament in compend.

In place of the Rosary the doctor suggests a list of texts from the Scriptures for morning and evening adapted to each day in the year, making in all 730 texts to be learned by heart. How few in this busy life can accomplish this formidable task? How few could draw on this great storehouse of wealth without reference to book?

One the other hand, how easy to learn the Rosary? A boy who knows his morning and evening prayers can learn it in half an hour, and in a few days he can associate properly the mysteries with it. These his young mind may not fully grasp, but as he grows and his mind expands they open up to his vision an inexhaustible field of thought and holy speculation. On recurring to them again and again he ever finds new evidences of the goodness and greatness of God, his Creator, Father

and Redeemer. With these mysteries well in his mind he is never wanting for solemn and sublime subjects of thought, be he a poor Richard or an Augustine.

It is a good sign to see our fellow-wayfarers recognizing the need of something in the nature of the Rosary. The hungry hearts yearn for something which frets not as the hungry, sleeping child frets for its mother's breast. Only those of them who have entered into the Church know the joy of awakening and plenitude of heart.—Rev. A. Lambert in Catholic Times.

TRIBUTE TO POPE LEO.

A Newspaper's Remarks in a Chapter on Religious Progress.

Summing up the benefits that have accrued to mankind during the year just closed the New York Recorder says:

In Christendom a decided tendency has been shown toward breadth and liberality. This may be, to some extent, due to the influence of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. But no accidental event has done more than accelerate the inevitable trend of recent events. The spread of scientific agnosticism among thinking men has tended to unify all Christian sects and religions against the common enemy. Further, the spread of education and of modern ideas, the continual battering down of the barriers between creeds, races and nationalities the closer relations established by scientific improvements and increased facilities of travel have all contributed to an increased solidarity of all humanity.

It is peculiarly fortunate for the Roman Catholics at this epoch that they should have at their head perhaps the most enlightened and progressive Pontiff who ever sat in the Papal chair. His policy has been shaped with a view toward the reconciliation of Catholicism with the most recent developments of modern civilization and modern science. His deliverances on the social question have manifested a large intelligence and a quick human sympathy. French Royalists resent his recognition of the French Republic, with a consequent decrease in the Peter's pence collection, but the falling off of the contributions of the conservative element is outweighed a thousandfold by the significant spectacle of the presence of the French Cabinet in a body at the solemn services held in honor of Joan of Arc on April 22.

The attendance of French Republican Ministers at a Catholic religious service in honor of a French Catholic heroine just beatified by the Pope is a sign that the old antagonism against the Church is a thing of the past. Even more memorable are the Papal encyclicals looking toward a reunion of the Anglican, Lutheran and Greek Churches with the Catholic. At the very close of the year it is announced that the Pope intends drawing together at the Vatican a synod of Catholic prelates of England and America in order to confer with them about the best means of realizing the plans laid out in these encyclicals.

In America we have recently enjoyed the spectacle of a Catholic prelate preaching in an Episcopal pulpit and of a Baptist congregation extending the use of its church to a Catholic congregation. That Masses should ever be offered in a church whose members have long been distinguished for their hostility to Rome would have seemed equally incredible to Pius IX. or to Dr. Adoniram Judson.

Yet side by side with this growing tolerance, by a curious perversity of no uncommon occurrence in human affairs, the past year has seen the rise and development of a fanatical movement of extreme Protestants banded together to war against the influence of Catholics and in lesser degree of foreigners in American political life. This is, of course, the secret order known as the A. P. A. or American Protective Association. That the association does not represent the opinions of enlightened Protestants is manifest from the fact that these Protestants are its most outspoken opponents.

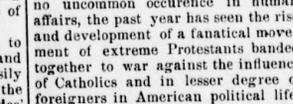
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