

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

By Rev. N. M. Redmond
QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

KNOWLEDGE OF OURSELVES OUR
GREATEST NEED

"What wilt thou that I do to thee?" (Luke xlviii. 41)

Great and numerous are our needs, but how few know that which to them is of greatest moment. Our ignorance of ourselves is very profound. We run hither and thither in quest of knowledge; we read books and papers in great numbers; we are well "made up" in current topics, but the study, of all, the most important—self, remains untouched. Through life we go with this unpurged book always with us, and when our divine Lord asks what we most need, we know not how to answer. He spoke well who said: "Truly to know ourselves, is the highest and most profitable lesson. Without self-knowledge we can have no true humility, and without the latter we can have no supernatural virtue. Behold, therefore, how momentous it is to know ourselves! An education in the science of self, then, is at the bottom of true humility. How comes this? Whence we came, what we are, how we shall be—all preach humility. An animal body, a soul from nothing, the simple offerings of charity, are all each one of us brought into life—

year more, the original course of our future we brought. But lo! the tale fill now, what a crush of pride it is! The forbidding scenes of black ingratitude, the varied species of venial and the murderous consequences of mortal evil, fill almost the history of the past. How we have provoked God, how we have grieved the Angels, how we have persecuted our souls! What confusion has reigned within us, what horror at times our condition bespoke, what occasions have called for our damnation! How much better are we today? Ah, that we were educated in the science of self, as the Saints have been! Then we would comprehend our utter unworthiness of all regard from God and His creatures. What hatred we would ostracise ourselves as traitors to God; with disgust we would condemn ourselves as slaves to the devil; and with great gratitude, we would thank and glorify God for not ere this having sent us to the place of our deserts, in hell. We would honestly, as the Saints have done, in our hearts pronounce ourselves the worst of all; we would hail, as our well-merited portion, the united action of all God's creatures, to revenge upon us the cause of their Creator. Our groaning under miseries, our blindness to good, our ill control of passions, our want of virtue, and our propensity to evil, would all, to our great humiliation, appear clear. But oh, what humility we find in the study of our future! We are on life's stage to-day; to-morrow we will be in the broad eternity. How soon this to-morrow will come, we know not, but it cannot be very far distant. What shall be the circumstances which it will bring? How will stand our moral relations with God, when it comes? God only knows. To us they are shrouded in mystery. But this we know—that the earth will feed on our bodies, and either heaven or hell will have our souls. Which shall it be? Ah, this is the uncertainty which haunts us through life—"We know not whether we are worthy of love or hatred." How terrible is this uncertainty! At the thought of it the greatest Saints have trembled. Sinned we know we have, but we know not absolutely whether our repentance has been adequate to our guilt. We hope it has been, and we fear it has not been. Hence, between hope and fear we must go through life and enter into eternity. Then, and only then, will we have absolute certainty of our eternal lot. Where then, O where, is there room for pride, presumption, and self-love? The answer therefore which each should make to our blessed Lord, Who in His loving kindness says: "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" is, "Lord, that I may know myself." This knowledge, as far as it is possible for us, in the awful uncertainty which hangs over our lives, is undoubtedly that which to each of us is most important; without it we are poor; without it we are blind on hell's wayside. Oh, that we had faith like unto his who was poor and blind on Jericho's wayside; a faith, which under the most reverse circumstances would appear full of life and energy—which the world could not silence, which menaces could not discourage. Then would each of us cry out, nothing daunted by the circumstances surrounding him: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then would the reproofs of our spiritual enemies be answered with a voice "much louder than before," till the reward of our faith would be the knowledge of ourselves.

These few thoughts should suffice to remind us that the sad misery under which we, alas, groan, is ignorance of ourselves. This want of knowledge in the science of self is the great cause of our spiritual poverty and blindness. Of it we must, at least, be partially cured, or our salvation will be the forfeit. Whatever then will prove a remedy should be most zealously hailed. It is undoubtedly true that sermons, instructions, and good religious books and papers are as mirrors which afford us at least partial views of ourselves. They, at least, give us the cue which brings us, as it were,

face to face with ourselves by frequent and serious consideration. When this has been effected, the extent of our need in this particular will grow upon us till we will be convinced that ignorance of ourselves has been the great misery of our life. Then, like the Saints and the poor blind beggar, having fully realized our great need, each will give a hearty response to Jesus by constantly praying: "Lord, that I may know myself."

TEMPERANCE

ALCOHOL AND HEALTH

There is nothing so dependable as the law of average. Throw up a penny three times and it many come down heads every time or tails every time; but throw it up 300,000 times or 3,000,000 times and you will find the result about half and half. Life insurance companies fix their premium rates on this law of average. They have studied this law for many years and their findings can be depended on. They know what diseases carry most people away, what accidents are most liable to happen, what habits most conduce to death. Life insurance companies will reject a drinker and look doubtfully upon a risk who drinks even moderately. They have found that the average of those who drink extremely moderately live a shorter time than a teetotaler. There are exceptions, of course, but we are speaking of the average. The average longevity of teetotalers is much greater than that of even moderate drinkers. The true figures may be obtained from any actuary.

Science has found that every one of the vital organs of the body is impaired by alcohol. Also, that the brain is injured thereby; the power to think is lessened; memory is impaired; and all the faculties deadened and benumbed. Correspondingly, we grow deficient in morals, courage, energy, skill, accuracy and general worth. Chief of all, it has been proven mathematically that sub-normal children are the result of alcoholic parents and startling statistics have been computed touching this phase. A man's virility is weakened by alcoholic indulgence, "booze."—Temperance Advocate.

HOW THE HABIT GROWS

The "Delineator" had, recently, an article by former Governor Malcolm Patterson, of Tennessee, who described among other things the beginnings and the hold of the alcohol habit: "A child will instinctively turn from liquor, and if given it, its body will shudder at the unnatural administration. The first drink I ever took was at an open bar on the invitation of some friends, at the age of twenty. I did not want it, but was asked to try it, and did so from the wish to appear companionable. This first drink almost nauseated me and the thought came, how could any human being crave it.

"I was never an habitual drinker at any time in my life; but later on the craving would come at intervals, especially after fatigue, when one drink would follow another in rapid succession, with the inevitable result of disordered nerves, lowered vitality, incapacity to act or think clearly, and a feeling of inferiority and disgust. When I would compare the misery that was mine after a day or a night of moderate drinking I would gladly have paid any price in exchange for the fatigue of constant work, for I had to begin work, again with the fatigue and the effects of drink combined."

FOLLOWING CHRIST

In the holy season of Lent, which opens on next Wednesday, we should strive each day to meditate quietly for even a brief interval on the closing events of our Lord's last days on earth. As well as we can let us try to follow Him, bearing our own crosses patiently because His Cross is so heavy with the burden of the sins of the world. As He goes His painful way to Calvary He does not command us to follow Him; we must command us to follow Him; we must command us to follow Him.

The very phrase "Following Christ," says Dom Bede Jarrett, O. P., in his "Meditations for Layfolk" shows how voluntary must be our service of Him. He recognizes the freedom of choice that He Himself has given us. There must be no compulsion; no long line of captives led grimly behind Him. His own ministry among men—though it might be at the behest of His Father "I am come to do the will of Him that sent Me."—though even His death, according to His own phrase, might be "necessary," was yet the free and willing service of His subjection.

As His own ministry was freely undertaken and pursued to the end, so of the same nature was His appeal to men who wished to walk in His footsteps. He compelled their love, not by words of command, but by the example of His life, by its purity and strength, by the tenderness of His love, His great sympathy, His justice and truth. What alone He asks of us or would be willing to accept, is the devotion of a son, as we learn from His sermons and parables and prayers. Through His apostles, He is ever insistent upon "the glorious liberty of the Sons of God." Therefore, we can take or reject His yoke. We can follow Him, or we can turn away from Calvary; but His love encompasses us and draws us back to the

cross, and to the acceptance of our own share of sorrow and suffering. There is something to be borne by us, some difficulties to be overcome, some disappointments, some agonies in the busy streets, some loneliness, some betrayals, some jeers. We are free, yet have called ourselves followers, and He will take care that we do follow Him. . . . We follow freely in the footsteps of love. Not spasmodically like Peter, at one time zealous and promising to die for Christ, at another denying all acquaintance with Him; but deliberately and with full knowledge of what the consequences are likely to be; calmly striving to keep up to His stride and pace, we hurry after Him. Certainly we shall never catch up to Him. He will go forever swinging down the great highway, His figure heading the great crusade. Right away, His form showing against the grey and dusty pathway, can He be seen leading His followers. But at least I am going in the same direction; stumbling, falling, foot-sore, hot, weary, it is a blessed thing for me to be still following with a heart glad and gay.—Sacred Heart Review.

WONDERFUL GROWTH OF CHURCH

CATHOLIC POPULATION IS NOW WELL OVER 16,000,000

Thirty-two years have elapsed since the third Plenary Council of Baltimore. The archbishops and the bishops of the country, then assembled in joint pastoral, commented on the remarkable growth of the Church during the eighteen years since the second Plenary Council. They dwelt with special emphasis on the growth of religion and civilization in the Western States.

In relating the full story of the Church during the past thirty-two years, many books might be written, for each diocese and almost every parish has a story to tell of sacrifice and struggle.

BIGOTRY IN GEORGIA

The forces of bigotry in Georgia, aiming to cripple Catholic education in that State, have overshot their mark. Recently the accusation was made that two Catholic schools in Savannah were receiving State aid "in violation of the policy of our Government in regard to the use of State funds for denominational schools."

The roll of honor of the Third Plenary Council contained the names of 12 archbishops and 71 bishops present, either personally or by proxy. Only 5 of those names are on the roll today: Cardinal Gibbons, who presided as Apostolic Delegate; Archbishop Ireland, Bishop Chatard, Gallagher and Richter. To these may be added the Abbots of Conception and St. Benedict. Seventy-eight archbishops and bishops and 4 abbots then present have since been called to their reward.

In 1884 there were 12 Arch-episcopal Sees, to which have since been added those of St. Paul and Dubuque. Episcopal Sees, together with Vicariates Apostolic numbered 59—in all, 71 Sees. At that time America was represented in the College of Cardinals by 1 member, Cardinal McCloskey. Today the American Church has 3 cardinals; 111 dioceses, of which 14 are arch-dioceses; 120 archbishops and bishops and 2 bishops of the Ruthenian-Greek rite.

The Apostolic Delegation was established in 1893 with Cardinal Satolli as first Apostolic Delegate. Four years later, in 1897, he was succeeded by the present Cardinal Martinelli, who, on being raised to the cardinalate, was succeeded by Archbishop Falconio in 1902. The present delegate, Archbishop Bonzano, the fourth in office, was appointed in 1912.

In 1884 there were 7,763 churches in the United States. The Catholic Directory for this year gives the number of churches at the beginning of 1916 as 14,900. It may safely be said that the present-day number of churches is double that of thirty-two years ago. But the growth in the number of the clergy is even more remarkable. Balancing the losses through death in the ranks of the clergy with the ordinations during the current year, the total number today is well over 19,000 secular and regular. In 1884 the total number of both was 6,835.

NOW OVER 16,000,000

Bishop McQuaid, in a sermon at the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, estimated the Catholic population of the United States at 6,500,000. The Catholic Directory for this year gives the Catholic population as 16,564,409, which, according to many well versed in Catholic affairs, is much too low, for the Catholic population approaches very nearly twenty million souls. Either estimate places our strength at approximately one-fifth of the entire population of the country. If one extreme is too high the other is too low; so, assuming the middle term to be correct, the Catholic population of the United States would be almost 18,000,000, or half the entire Christian people of all denominations of the country. It is not a difficult matter to account for this splendid growth, for the same causes and principles of increase have been at work almost throughout the whole history of the Church in America.

In 1884 there were in this country 2,582 Catholic schools in which were taught 481,894 children. Today there are 6,397 parochial schools taking care of the elementary education of 1,456,206 children. Thirty years ago there were 708 seminaries, colleges and academies for the education of young men for the service of the altar and for the higher and professional education of the youth of both sexes.

The million and a half pupils under Catholic care and training do not include those who are engaged in the study of the higher branches. There are over 1,500 other educational institutions consisting of seminaries, colleges, academies, universities and technical schools. In our academies and colleges there are over 120,000 students; in the professional and university schools about 9,000; in Catholic orphanages, about 30,000; in seminaries, 6,200; in all other schools about 27,000, giving a grand total of 1,648,400 young people in Catholic educational institutions in the United States. Father Wynne, S. J., who is authority for these figures, estimates the physical value of those institutions at \$100,000,000.—The Tablet.

A CHASTENING EXPERIENCE

A New Zealand Tablet suggests a remedy for carpenters in the following: "A Swiss Catholic Bishop, who had been an editor, and speaks from first-hand experience, says: 'I do not wonder that many editors grow old early and that there are many tragedies of overwork in the journalistic profession bringing in their train heart disease and death. Scarcely another profession is responsible for so much heart and nerve trouble as that of the newspaper man, whose troubles and whose trials I have learned to rightly estimate. It would be wholesome for those who glance through a paper and then criticize it to take service for six months in an editor's office.'"

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DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE, OTTAWA OCTOBER 7th, 1916.

the family. In all my experiences," remarks the Bishop, "I remember but few incidents that impressed me

more forcibly than did this lesson given on the duty to assist at Mass on Sunday.—Sacred Heart Review.



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