

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE APOSTOLATE OF GOOD EXAMPLE

"At that time when John had heard in prison the works of Christ, sending two of his disciples, he said to him: 'Art thou that Christ was, or look we for another?' (Matt. xi, 2, 3.)"

How strangely these words sound! St. John, who was to go before Our Lord Jesus Christ and announce His coming, apparently was not convinced that Christ was the true Redeemer. However, such was not the case. St. John knew well who Christ was. He sent the two disciples to Him not to quiet himself in any doubt, for he had none, but to satisfy these disciples and their brethren, and to convince them that Christ was really the Messiah—the promised Redeemer. Christ, in His divine wisdom, understood this mission of the disciples, and gave them the proofs that He knew would convince them. Had He only asserted that He was really the Christ, they perhaps would have returned with doubt yet in their minds. He had recourse to facts—the great works that He had performed, and would continue to perform. These they could neither deny nor doubt, for they were open to their eyes.

There is a great example contained in this fact for people of the world today to imitate. How many doubting individuals find every where! They are, at least many of them, not to be condemned because of their state of mind. For the most part, they were born in an atmosphere of doubt and continue to be surrounded by it. Are they willing to remain in it? The fact is that many live and die in it; but they are either neglected, or are the victims of circumstances, for God will make the truth known to the diligent and earnest searchers after truth in religion. However, as the mind craves for certainty, and the intellect for truth, we must say that they are not willing to remain in doubt; and, should the way that would rid them of uncertainty be pointed out to them, they would quickly enter upon it. Many souls today are groping in the dark who would soon be followers of the light were it made known to them in the proper way.

It is the duty of Catholics to point out the way to salvation to their doubting neighbors, both by word and by example. We have the truth, and it always can be made known to him who yearns for it. This is within the power of all good Catholics. To the ordinary lay person, as well as to the apostle and minister of Christ, these words were addressed: "You are the salt of the earth," and "You are the light of the world." But how are Catholics to perform this duty? It is to be done by their good, exemplary lives; by their kind word of persuasion; and by their knowledge, which they may communicate to others, of the great truths of their Church.

The life of a good Christian is a power. Why? Because it is a truth. If you are good, you will be true to God and to your neighbor. Who will notice this good life you lead and not look for the reasons that urge you on? Four neighbors will realize that there must be something of great weight and truth causing you to lead a good life, and naturally they will be impelled to seek for this cause. Will this search be successful? It will be in every instance. The fact of your good conscientious life will be a truth more convincing to them than thousands of words from learned orators and zealous exponents of the faith. Christ, in answer to the queries of the two disciples of John, pointed to the works that He had performed. This alone convinced them.

The doubting mind is generally susceptible to truthful impressions, and the man who is really in honest doubt will go where he thinks he will receive them. The good Catholic can direct him to the point at which he may receive the instruction he desires. This can be done by persuasion. It is evident that the man in doubt needs persuasion. God wishes all to have certainty in religion—a certainty in vision and a certainty in faith. Both reason and faith are among the elements that constitute a religious man. Your belief is reasonable. Of this you generally can persuade others—if you possess the knowledge of your religion that you should. If your hearers are in earnest, God will infuse into their hearts the faith that is necessary to believe the truths that are above reason. Thus they will arrive at certainty in religious belief.

Lastly, by a mere enumeration of the great facts in the Church, the good Christian can help to bring a doubting man—speaking always of a man in honest doubt—to the truth. Every word that Christ predicted about the Church is being verified. She alone has withstood the rage of the enemy prepared to corrupt her if possible, and has fought, courageously and successfully, any innovations in God's law or doctrine. For her truths—abstract as many may be—men have sacrificed everything, even life itself. To her invitation thousands have responded, left behind all worldly hopes, and sacrificed their lives for her cause. The poor, the sick, and the aged are being cared for by her. These, and thousands of other great facts regarding the Catholic Church, may be cited to

the man who is in doubt about the truth in religion. All are truths that his mind must accept.

Outside the true fold today are many who would be in it, had they seen good example in their Catholic acquaintances, and had the truths of the Church been pointed out to them. Strive by word and work to bring about an increase in the number of the members of the one true Church. Opportunities always will be offered you, for there are many who are as earnestly searching for proofs of the true religion as were the two disciples, of whom we read above, searching for the true Christ. May Catholics make these proofs known to the world so that Christ's words: "There shall be one fold and one shepherd," may become realized more and more.

KEEP STRONG AND HEALTHY

It is impossible to feel active and energetic when the bowels are clogged from undigested food.

When this condition exists it gives rise to constipation, biliousness, sick headache, a muddy skin, blotches, pimples and other liver marks; there is lack of energy and a more or less tired feeling.

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RELIGIOUS PEACE IN NETHERLANDS

(By Right Rev. Mgr. John F. Nell)

Did you know that Holland is situated, for the most part, lower than sea level; that one-half its area has been reclaimed from the sea and rivers by means of immense dykes? This feat was accomplished in the tenth century.

Amsterdam, like the city of Venice, Italy, is built on piles. The suffix "dam" to the names of Holland's big cities, such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, suggests the dykes or the walls of clay, cemented together by intertwined willows, which hold back the waters. The country is intersected by canals in every direction; they serve as highways, as drain ditches, and as property-line fences.

POPULATION VERY DENSE

Holland is very densely populated, having 205 people to the square mile, as against 11 in the United States. The small arable area of Holland is divided into 200,000 small farms, which, though very productive, are not able to supply a decent competence to the tiller thereof. Despite this, the little country is quite prosperous though just now there is much unemployment, as there is throughout Europe. The cost of living is considerably higher than in the neighboring kingdom of Belgium.

While Amsterdam is the Capital of Holland, Queen Wilhelmina lives at the Hague, which is a very beautiful city located on the seashore, and which is the seat of the Temple of Peace, built by our Andrew Carnegie. This monument has been mocked by war practically ever since its construction.

The traveler through Holland, is struck particularly by three things: (1) The extreme cleanliness of homes and public buildings both inside and out. Real "Dutch Cleaners" are to be found at work everywhere in the Netherlands. (2) The universal use of the bicycle on the part of men, women and children. In the big cities the traffic cops direct bicyclists in the same manner as they direct automobilists in American cities. It is quite common for 50 or 60 bicycle riders to gather within a block within a minute's time to be held up until an equal number is permitted to proceed from the opposite direction. (3) The hundreds of square miles between Amsterdam and the Hague which are devoted to the culture of flowers. During May the country, as far as the eye could see, was covered with blooming tulips and hyacinths. Nearly all the tulip bulbs sold in this country come from Holland. The country is rendered more picturesque by the huge low windmills, which grind practically every small farm. They pump the water from the low ground into the canals, which conduct it to the sea; but they are also used to grind corn.

CATHOLIC CHURCH PROSPERING

We frequently speak of Protestant Holland, while considerably more than one-third of the population, estimated at 7,000,000, is Catholic, and the Catholic Church is growing while Protestantism, mainly Calvinism, is, to say the least, at a standstill. There is a large Jewish quarter in Amsterdam. The fact that the International Eucharistic Congress was held in Amsterdam this year is proof of the strength and ardor of Holland's

Catholic faith. Holland leads the world in foreign mission workers, and in the patronage accorded its more than one hundred Catholic papers.

Church and State are separate, while the State supports both Catholic and Protestant schools in addition to the Public schools, which are free to all.

CHURCHES FIGHT SOCIALISM

Instead of the Protestant element organizing against the Catholic and seeking to injure it by slander and misrepresentation, as is done in this country, the Protestants of Holland seek to have Catholics unite their forces with them to prevent the ascendancy of Christianity's common enemy; and "the best man for the position" is their motto in Parliament. At present the minister of Parliament is a Catholic, and a priest heads the Catholic party, which has about one-third of all the representatives. The Protestant party has one-fourth of the representatives; and these two groups constitute the Right Wing against the Socialists and Liberals, who make up about two-fifths of the membership of Parliament—the Left Wing. There is still another party, which leans towards the Liberals, and which usually votes with the Right. The co-operation of Catholics and Protestants is responsible for the fair school laws in this little kingdom.

THE MISSION OF A PICTURE

The impression produced on men's minds by pictures is more powerful than words, and frequently explains what cannot be expressed by words.—St. Gregory.

In one of our Catholic hospitals a priest was standing beside the bed of a dying Jew. A message had been sent to him to come for an urgent case.

"Father, I wish to die a Catholic. I have had a talk with the little Sister of Charity here, and she has answered all my questions in regard to the Catholic Faith."

His eyes wandered off to the wall beyond the foot of his bed, where there hung a beautiful steel engraving of the Crucifixion: Christ hanging between the two thieves, and His Mother looking up with tear-dimmed eyes at the sweet face of her dying Son, the promised Messiah of the Jews, the Saviour of the world. The dying man, pointing feebly to the picture, said:

"Father, it is that picture that has brought me to the Catholic Church. I lay here, day after day, gazing at it and I asked its meaning. Sister told me of the prophecies in the Old Law and of their fulfillment in Christ. I wish to die a Catholic."

After he had received Holy Baptism, and his first Holy Communion as Vinticum, and the last rites, the serious though glad-featured little Sister who had been instrumental in bringing the man into the Church elucidated further.—(From Editor's Notes in The Messenger of the Sacred Heart.)

Ignorance, when it is voluntary, is criminal, and he may properly be charged with evil who refuses to learn how he might prevent it.

I am the wheat of God, let me be ground by the teeth of beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ.—St. Ignatius.

The boy who is always telling about what he intends to do tomorrow is the same boy that is always regretting what he didn't do yesterday.

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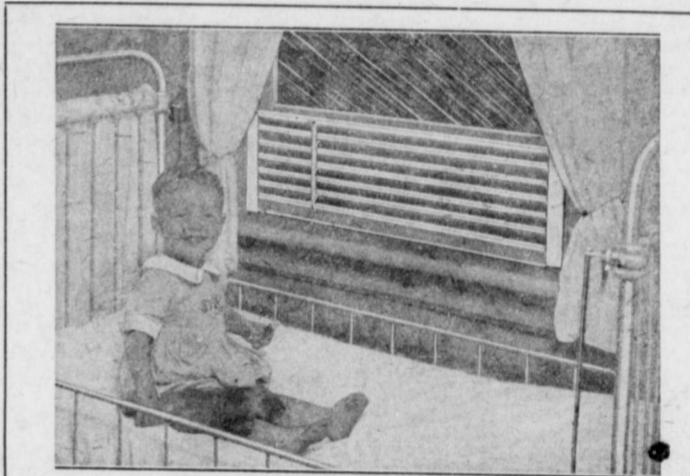
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