

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

REV. F. P. HICKRY, O. S. B. TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

WHENCE OUR COURAGE AND STRENGTH? "That you may be able to resist in the evil day." (Eph. vi. 12.)

Our life is a warfare, my dear brethren, and yet in spite of constant defeats and wounds we must not lose heart, and think our life nothing better than a forlorn hope. If we trust to ourselves we may well lose heart. But no one need be discouraged if he looks up to that King Who bids us go forth, for He provides us with the arms and strength wherewith to conquer. "Fear not, and be not dismayed; because the Lord Thy God is with thee in all things, whatsover thou shalt go to." (Jos. 1. 9)

And we need this courage and strength indeed, for we have to strive against the devil, overcome ourselves, and the issue of the conflict is eternal. Yes, these are the three things that cause us to fear. Our own selves—we cannot be sure of our own selves; we will and we will not; we begin and we give up. So weak, so full of faults, so easily discouraged, so easily moved, cannot trust our own selves. And yet we have to overcome our vices, govern our passions, and resist our desires and inclinations.

This would be work enough, but this poor self of ours is tempted, misled, duped, tyrannized over by an enemy whom we cannot see, but who is ever watching us. This enemy is ever planning "the evil day," lurking in ambush, ever ready for the attack when he hopes we shall not be able to resist.

And in this conflict there is no truce, no compromise, no hopes of terms of peace, no it's a struggle unto death; and what a death—the loss of God, our all, in all abandonment by Him and everlasting slavery under the tyranny of the devil.

But all this must not dismay us, but urge us the more earnestly to seek the sources of our courage and strength. God has not cast us into the conflict for our ruin, but that we may emerge victorious. Remembrance of God's mercy and goodness is our first incitement to take courage that "we may be able to resist in the evil day." "The Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him." (Lam. iii. 25)

"Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded. For who hath continued in His commandment, and hath been forsaken? or who hath called upon Him, and He hath despised him? He is a protector to all that seek Him." (Eccles. ii. 11, 13.)

God became man for our redemption, and remembrance of Christ's love for us, that He became our brother, fills our heart with comfort and courage.

"God so loved the world, as to give His Only-Begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." (John iii. 16.) "If God be for us, who is against us? He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32, 33.)

And this is not our own reasoning and deductions from God's goodness and love, but we have not in the Scriptures the word of God promising help, the promises of God, the pledge of God, oftentimes repeated: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." (Ps. xlix. 15.) And again: "In an acceptable time I have heard thee, and in the day of salvation I have helped thee; and I have preserved thee. And all flesh shall know, that I am the Lord that save thee, and thy Redeemer." (Isa. xlix. 8, 26.)

If our enemy is cleverer than we are, and has schemes that we see not and cannot grapple with, how consoling it is for us to know that we are not all in the conflict, but that the wisdom and power of God is with us! God knows and sees all things—our weakness and ignorance, the plots of the devil, all the eventualities of life—and He has the power to arrange that with "the evil day," grace shall more abound, and to make from the temptation an issue of victory for us.

No one need fear but that there will be abundance of help and strength from God to enable us to resist if we only ask it from Him. But there is always one danger—we may trust to ourselves. It is he who trusts in himself, and not in God, who falls. We must, then, be humble and distrustful of our own powers and goodness. God watches over the humble, and before the prayer has left our lips He is with us and assists us. And the holy fear of God will be our safeguard. With these two dispositions in our hearts, humility and the holy fear of God, it is impossible not to pray and not to pray fervently and constantly, and impossible likewise for those prayers not to be heard. "I sought the Lord, and He heard me: and He delivered me from all my troubles. The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him; and shall deliver them. The Lord is high unto them that are of a contrite heart: and He will save the humble of spirit." (Ps. xxxiii. 5, 8, 10.)

These, then, are the sources of our courage and strength to resist in the evil day: in humility and fear to invoke the help of the Lord—that Lord Who is mercy and goodness itself, Who became our brother to prove His love,

Who has promised and pledged Himself to hear us and defend us, Who is all-wise and all-powerful. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. xxvi. 1, 2.)

GENERAL INTENTION FOR OCTOBER

RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XV.

A SAINTLY PRIESTHOOD

In every walk in life there is a cry for men. The appeal is not simply for men that are mere human beings, for of such the visible supply is abundant, but for men who shall measure up to the demand of the present day and hour. The world is always in need of high-minded citizens, of ripe scholars, of persuasive speakers, of trustworthy administrators of temporal goods. Each of them has his acknowledged sphere of public usefulness; and each should receive from a clear-sighted and discriminating people his need of praise for all that he does, his learning, his eloquence, or his business ability.

All these claims to recognition are found in the priest, for he is a citizen endowed with patriotism, with learning, with ability as a public speaker, and with a certain skill in pecuniary matters; but all these titles fall far short of the ideal which is realized with what might be called almost monotonous sameness, whether it be in the shepherd of a rustic flock or in the pastor of a parish where all, perhaps, breathe elegance and refinement.

The priest's functions are not limited to the affairs of every-day life. For all the patriotism of their citizens, great States decay; for all the learning of their wise men, they may sink back into mental darkness; for all the ability of their financiers, bankruptcy may be their lot. The priest, however, though toiling in the present, has his gaze ever fixed on the future. His hope is to secure for his flock not merely some fleeting temporal advantage, but the blessings of a happy eternity. His one great all-consuming desire is to be an instrument in the hands of Almighty God for the salvation of souls.

To save a soul! Who can tell the value of a human soul? To save a human life is thank-worthy; to raise the dead is awe-inspiring. But he who saves a human life, even he who by the Divine power, recalls the dead to dwell once more among men, knows full well that the day will come when the general law will be enforced and the living shall be numbered with those that were and are not. But to save a soul is to secure it forever and ever against death or loss. This is the work of the priest. Is one soul then, so precious? It is in very truth the pearl of great price, for it is worth what it cost the Son of God. Weighed on Calvary in the balance of the Cross, its cost was the shame, the anguish, the death, of the Saviour of the world. The saints grasped this truth. The thought of it made them saints.

The world-to-day needs a Saviour as perhaps never before. Think of those that languish in the spiritual night of unbelief; count those that have come into the defiled inheritance of a schism precipitated in olden times by men who knew and recked not; recall those whose most cherished spiritual possession is a mutilated and disfigured creed from which so many life-giving elements have been ruthlessly hacked off. In the very bosom of the Church, moreover, have not we to lament many careless and indifferent Catholics who set little store by the spiritual treasures that she so solicitously spreads before them? Priests are needed, and many saintly priests would be all too few for the work at hand.

There are certain elements of success, we might almost call them, with which men fondly fancy that they can unfaithfully secure a happy outcome for their efforts and enterprises. If their family has an assured position in the esteem of the public, if they can control political influence, or if their social position gives them prestige, they think that, with talents and education, they are equipped for every eventuality. But in the work of the sacred ministry, the elements of success are of a quite different order. As the most divine of works is the work of saving souls, so the elements of success in achieving it are of an order in keeping with the nature of the work. The elements of success are the elements of saintliness.

The efficiency of the priest is due primarily to his sacred character. The world in general recognizes him as distinctly different from the miscellaneous and parti-colored aggregation which goes by the name of "non-Catholic clergy." Not only by Divine consecration but also in the popular acceptance, the priest is singled out, set apart, and dedicated to special unworldly functions. His co-operation with this consecration means the cultivation of those qualities which most closely unite him to Almighty God who has called him. Prayer, purity of conscience, and zeal are the priest's secondary elements of success. By his fidelity to Almighty God, the "alpha and omega, the beginning and the end" of all his plans and undertakings, he does God's Will perfectly in the time, place, and circumstances which that Divine Will points out to him as his

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lifework. These elements of success are invincible.

When is Holy Mother Church to draw those many saintly priests. Is she to elect them as she elects mayors and aldermen are elected? Is she to appoint them, as Federal judges are appointed? Is she to hold a contest, as prizes are awarded for a debate or an oration? Is she to choose them by the lot, as talesmen are drawn? It would require a very special and unmistakable manifestation of the Divine Will to warrant her in proceeding according to these or any similar methods. Matthias and Paul and Peter Chryologus and Ambrose are types of the extraordinary ways in which God may manifest His Will; but they are so exceptional that it would be rash to ask or even to expect them. The commonly travelled paths are the safest and surest.

Is it possible to define, or even to describe, what is to be understood by the term, "vocation to the priesthood?" Does it consist in something so vague and elusive that it can be known only after years of patient research? Does it come from the family circle, as do many physical, mental, and moral traits? May one evolve a vocation to the priesthood for oneself, as one develops a leaning towards architecture, or the law, or agriculture?

If men are to give their best years and their best powers to the service of the altar, it is plain that the period of proximate preparation should begin before the physical and mental qualities of the candidate are on the wane, namely, while he is in the full glory of his young manhood, for the training is long and trying. If, therefore, the prospective levite must grope in the dark for years before he may safely say that he is called to the priesthood, he loses precious years and may suffer other harm and be, in consequence, less useful to religion. It is idle, therefore, to think that only years of research and investigation can determine the reality of a vocation to the sacred ministry.

In the ideal Catholic home, where the spirit of religion rules, we contemplate the nursery of a galaxy of virtues which adorn the soul as the rarest gems deck the person of their envied possessor. Gratitude to God for mercies received, tender piety, respect for authority, a spirit of dependence, and innocence of life are among the hallowed memories which linger round a child's life, and God's rights claimed and received the first place. If those lessons had been always faithfully followed as they had been diligently impressed on the plastic mind and memory of the growing child, many a life history would be differently written. But lessons in virtuous living do not constitute a priestly vocation. They are, on the contrary, the precious heritage of every Catholic child, for they are the foundation of a life pleasing to God and prophetic of a happy eternity in whatever circumstances of time or place or occupation one's life may be spent.

THE ROSARY MONTH

If there is one thing dear to the Catholic heart it is our Blessed Lady, who from her heavenly throne above never fails to throw over our lives the powerful mantle of her protection and to hold up before our eyes the irresistible example of her virtues. And if the Catholic heart instinctively loves Our Lady, it loves with an almost equal surety that form of prayer which she most loves. Since Our Lady herself gave us the Rosary, we may be certain that it is the prayer which she most cherishes. And we need not be surprised at this, since it is composed of that sublime prayer which our Blessed Saviour Himself in His infinite wisdom and goodness taught us, and of the prayer which was first uttered in the courts of heaven by the Eternal Father to the angel who was sent to the lowly maiden's humble call in Nazareth. Even if Our Lady had not taught us how to say the beads, our common sense would prove to us that it is the most excellent kind of prayer, combining as it does the service of our lips and the full play of our mind. It is the homage of the entire man of God through the hands of our Blessed Lady, than which there is none more pleasing to Him.

When the Church officially set aside the month of October as a season during which we should recite the Rosary, it was in her mind that we take up this prayer with the firm conviction that it is the most suitable for our times. Leo XIII., than whom there was no more far-sighted statesman, wrote a magnificent encyclical on the Rosary and the social question, in which he proved this prayer to be one of the most efficacious

other or others. In a word, by becoming a priest, he abdicates no insignificant part of that freedom of action and independence of all restraint which men commonly hold so dear.

The priest's life, moreover, is a life of labor for others. In times of sorrow, of disappointment, and disaster, he is called upon to direct, to comfort, to hearten. Tales of woe are his daily bread; he is to mourn with the victims of man's inhumanity to man; and in time of calamity he is to "strengthen the trembling knees."

Since the priest is to follow and imitate our Divine Lord, the "Man of Sorrows," his life is to be a life of loneliness. Though in the world, he is not and cannot be of the world. He is in the world to point to better things and lead the way, even though few follow and they follow afar off. In the priest's life, there is scarcely room for those tender intimacies which are attendant upon deeply cherished friendship, for he must "become all to all, that he may save all." He may not "specialize" in certain souls to the exclusion of others committed to his pastoral care. Yes, with all his paternal interest in the well-being of his flock, the priest must preserve a certain aloofness, for he is in this world emphatically as St. Jerome who was farer. Judged by worldly standards, the priest's life must needs be a lonely life.

What follows from our few rambling remarks on the nature of the life to which, in virtue of his vocation, a priest called? It follows, above all, that a vocation to the sacred ministry must come from Him from whom comes "every best gift and every perfect gift, coming down from the Father of lights," as St. James (1: 17) beautifully says when expressing the supernatural nature of the choicest gifts that we receive. Only God could inspire the thought, only God could strengthen the determination, only God could grant perseverance unto the end.

Some are called in tender childhood as was St. Augustine who received his everlasting reward before having reached the goal of the sanctuary. Others are called in mature years, as was that Viceroy of Catalonia, the trusted adviser of the Emperor Charles V., who became St. Francis Borgia. But whether at dawn or at midday or in life's decline God, and only God, must summon the would-be priest. His vocation, His priests into His sanctuary. He may summon them by a lightning flash as He did St. Paul, or He may lead them as it were through haze and mist till, after much travail and many misgivings, the glorious day of His manifest Will bursts upon the wearied sojourner on life's toilsome way. These are the two extremes.

The middle course, which is the way most souls are led, is the effect of thought, serious thought, and prayer, earnest and continued prayer. Have I the physical fitness for the priesthood? Have I the necessary mental qualifications? Have I the moral strength to accept the invitation? If these questions can be answered in the affirmative by some trusted counsellor who knows my very soul, it would be impertinent if not senseless, to await a clearer intimation of what God would have me undertake. But, whether early or late, whether with trumpet tones or by a still, small voice, vocation to the priesthood is from God. Environment, counsel, example, watchful care, and exhortation may arouse the quiescent germ of activity and to strong and healthy growth, just as the lack of them may bring on a deadly blight. But the germ, no man can give. It is from God. It is a part of His Divine Providence in regard to His creature. Our duty it is to pray that it may be cherished and nourished unto fruitful perfection in many saintly priests.

HENRY J. SWIFT, S. J.

mean of eliminating the great evils from which the times were suffering. And since 1893, when the encyclical was written, the times have not grown less perilous. We are at the present moment in the midst of a storm the fury of which no statesman, however far-seeing, would have dared to predict. It is therefore to Our Lady of the Rosary that we turn in this crucial hour, feeling confident that as she helped to ameliorate the religious condition of the world before the War, so now she will help to bring back peace, and that love of justice which is necessary for the continuation of civilization. If every Catholic during the month of October, were to say his beads with devotion each day, he would put into the national consciousness a leaven which would raise to a higher plane the religious sense of the nation. It is our patriotic duty to do all we can to win the War, and for this reason if for no other we should during the Rosary month beseech Our Lady not only to protect the boys who are fighting or preparing to fight for our land but also to steel the hearts of those who remain behind for any sacrifice they may be called upon to make. It is our duty to beseech Our Lady to deepen the Faith in our hearts, and we can find no surer means of obtaining this than by reciting the prayer which puts before our minds the principal mysteries of our holy religion.—Rosary Magazine.

IF
If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or, being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;
If you can dream and not make dreams your master;
If you can think and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;
If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the will which says to them, "Hold on";
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings, nor lose the common touch;
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforfeiting minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son."
—RUDYARD KIPLING

IF

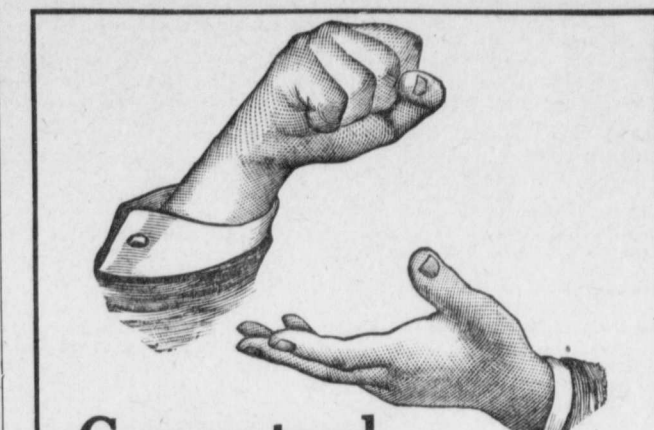
"IT WILL HELP ME"
A soldier writing to his mother relates how one day in the trenches he was addressed by a Protestant officer.
"Are you going to the Mass tomorrow?"
"Yes of course!" I answered.
"Could I go with you?" questioned the officer.
"Certainly, you'll be welcome if you want to come," I said.
"Sunday morning we made our way together over to the field Mass, and going along the officer said to me: "May I remain next to you at the Mass?"
"Surely," I answered.
"Just as moment before we reached the enclosure the officer asked the same question. I showed surprise, no doubt, that he should be so anxious about such a simple matter. I was about to tell him so but he straight-way explained: "Well, my reason is this. I want to be right next to you when you come back from Communion, from receiving God. It will help me to be so close to God in you."
May we not hope that this perfect act of faith has, or will soon win its reward in the precious gift of baptism?—The Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.

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