

FIVE MINUTE SERMON
BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOY, D. D.
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

"THE SALVATION OF GOD"
"And all flesh shall see the salvation of God." (Luke III, 6)

"It is one thing to see, and another to believe. Could we see everything in its entirety, we would believe it all. What we see with our bodily eyes, we generally believe; but what we cannot see with them, we are often loath to believe. Seeing is believing, but believing is not always seeing. We believe many things because we have faith, not because we have a clear vision of them. This belief is reasonable, since we have motives for our faith.

Now, any one seeing our Divine Lord, during the days He lived upon earth, would not, humanly speaking, necessarily have been forced to believe in His divinity. He appeared as a mere man only. It was on special occasions that He did works proving His almighty power and divine mission. Any one not being present at these wonders, or not having heard of them, when seeing Him, would believe Him to be as any other man. Perhaps one would have noticed some extraordinary qualities in Him, but these could have been ascribed to singular natural gifts He may have possessed. The truth is, many regarded Him merely as a human being. The unbelievers of today regard Him.

There is no reason why every one should not know Christ as He really is. All flesh should "see the salvation of God." The vision all should have of Him must be divine. In other words, it must be a vision by faith. Even had he never performed the great works we read of in the Gospel, we still should have faith in His divinity. The humble shepherds who came to visit Him in the cave at Bethlehem on the first Christmas morning, had this faith in Him. So did the Wise Men from the East. Herod also believed in Him, though he did not fully understand His nature. His own mother, Mary, and His foster-father, Joseph, had faith in Him, though as yet He had not performed any great wonders. Why did they all thus admit His Godhead? Because they were rightly disposed for the reception from God of that great gift of faith. They readily could through that gift, "see the salvation of God."

How reprehensible in this regard are many of the world today! They do not—most of them never will—"see the salvation of God." Faith is a gift that must come from above. Like all high and divine gifts, it comes to him who is disposed for it, or who is ready to become so. Many are not disposing themselves for it. They are, rather, resisting from it. Among this number are many who know that Christ is God. He will not, however, bring their salvation. The world and its goods are practically their god. Beyond these confines they never cast their gaze. The work of Christ and the merits He gained during His life on earth, and particularly during His passion, are lost to them. Even should He appear in their midst, they would fail to reap the benefits flowing from His presence, and the majority of the Jews of old. And their lives will be copied by their children, whom they allow to grow up without a knowledge of Christ. The great feasts that commemorate some event in the life of Christ are turned into days of worldly joy, and very often frivolity.

The feast of Christmas, now near at hand, is an example. How unholy will it be observed by a great majority of the human race. From a worldly standpoint it will be successfully celebrated, but few will pass the day in the proper spirit. Thousands of children, if asked what mystery Christmas commemorates, could not give a proper reply. No longer is an anxiety manifested and care taken to have children become familiar with the life of Christ.

Catholics, who alone are the guardians of the divinity of Christ on earth, should not allow themselves to be influenced by what is being done around them. The feasts of the Church should be celebrated in the proper spirit. They should not think so much of the temporal joy that the gay spirit of the world in festivity can bring them; but they should strive to have the joy of the Lord in their hearts. They realize that their only salvation is Christ. With His life they all should be familiar. The great lessons He taught, by word and example, should be known to them. The doctrines of the Church He founded, as the ark of their salvation, should be studied and learned by them. They should be frequenters of the sacraments He instituted. Their lives, in a word, should be such as would edify all, and be an open profession of what they believe within their hearts.

It is only in this way that they will be able to "see the salvation of God." They should not, however, be satisfied to see it themselves; but they also should be the means of causing others to see it. This will be possible only when they show forth their belief in their daily lives, and let their religion manifest itself in their every word and in all their actions. Not a religion that is feigned or exaggerated, but a true religion of the heart—one that gives union to words, merit to actions, and works a saintly influence over others. The Catholic can thus do much for that part of humanity which oscillates with the world, and makes no real progress in the spirit. Now and then, at least, worldlings

can be influenced to look above the world and search for the way that will lead them to where life's problems truly will be solved and where they will "see the salvation of God."

PURGATORY

It was Pope Leo XIII, of inspiring memory, who wrote in one of those luminous encyclicals, which are the glory of his pontificate, that the moral disasters of a perverse world were to be traced directly to that world's concentration of thought and desire, not upon its duties, but upon its so-called rights. Nowadays, it would seem, both individually and as nations men can afford but scant consideration to what justice and conscience demand of them in the name of God; but in these questions of earthly advantage, of pleasures to be indulged in, of money to be gained, of means and influence to be increased in the shady byways of a doubtful commerce, the universal chorus, like to the cry of Satan's "Non serviam," is that we have a right to it all and who shall say us nay? What wonder that the sainted Leo exclaims in a burst of holy indignation: "We have heard enough of the rights of mankind; it is time to hear something of the rights of God."

And so we are emboldened to take up the thought that the doctrine of Purgatory is intimately interwoven with the claims upon us of a Supreme Being, whose divine rights to our absolute and complete homage and service, have not in the least been abdicated in the very omnipotent tenderness of His glorious creative and redeeming love. If there is a Purgatory, and the Church of Christ assures us there is, it is because God has rights—sovereign rights—and because it belongs to Him to set conditions when, and as He will in the forgiveness of sin, mortal or venial—conditions depending upon Him alone, in order that the full outpouring of His infinite mercy may in the end launch us into our envisioned beatitude. "Mercy and truth," the Psalmist tells us, "have met each other; justice and peace have kissed."

The more we examine into the teaching of the Church with regard to Purgatory, the more we realize that here as indeed, in every one of her doctrines, is made manifest a divine exhibition, of justice and peace, of mercy and truth. The longing impressed upon our souls by Him who made us for Himself is a "thirst after the strong living God." That God, in the words of Jeremiah, is a stronger revenger, and this avenger in the purging of His elect ones; and all the while it remains equally a truth of God, the same prophet declaring it, "that the Lord is good, for His mercy endureth forever." Purgatory in the purpose of its existence is a witness to the reality both of God's mercy and of God's justice; if its pains are excruciating, it is because God is within His undoubted rights when He would have them so, instruments in the cleansing of His loved ones, preparatory to the glory His mercy has in waiting for them. The fact that there are those who deny that twofold witness, need not make us falter whose faith bears upon it the stamp and assurance of "the Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

God has a right to our utmost, our entire service and when we contemptuously put aside that right in our commission of sin, He has a further right to punish us. If in His mercy He sees fit to condone for us what is undoubtedly deserved punishment—sees fit in the exercise of His surpassing mercy to pardon us, that pardon may take any share whatsoever which approves itself to Him. He is Lord and His Supreme dominion allows no questioning. Whether or not, when He forgives the guilt of sin, He does away with all or part of the satisfaction due, because of that sin, as reparation to His glory, is for Him and Him alone to decide. Adam's sin of disobedience was forgiven as far as its guilt was concerned, but all the ills that flesh is heir to are the continued toll of satisfaction for it to the end of time; and they are justly so because of an offended Creator within His divine rights in so decreasing. David to whom the choice was given of the special satisfaction to be offered for his absolved sin was not unmindful of God's mercy even in the selection made of penitence: "And David said to God: I am in a great strait; but it is better that I should fall into the hands of the Lord (for His mercies are many) than into the hands of men." And hence Purgatory, the place where souls suffer for a time after death on account of their sins, is no denial of God's justice; for it is He who has rightfully determined its sufferings as the satisfaction after death which He will accept for forgiven sin. Neither is it a denial of God's mercy, for it purifies and makes ready the longing soul for the undimmed vision of Him to whom Habacuk spoke in his inspired prophecy: "Thy eyes are too pure to behold evil and Thou canst not look on iniquity."

That God has created such a temporary home for both His justice and His mercy, we know from our Catholic faith. We believe in Purgatory because it is the teaching of the Church. Christ has safeguarded the accuracy of that teaching by His divine promise of Inerrancy. I hold firmly, so runs the Tridentine Profession of Faith, "that there is a Purgatory and that the souls detained there are helped by the suffrages of the faithful."—The Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.

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DIFFUSED OWNERSHIP

Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XV, recently expressed the desire that the people should study the great encyclical of his predecessor Pope Leo XIII on the social question, especially the immortal encyclical on the Condition of the Working Classes. The Hierarchy of the United States in their joint Pastoral heartily commended this advice to the faithful and to all the people of the United States. "They will find in these documents," says the letter, "the practical wisdom which the experience of centuries has stored up in the Holy See, and that solicitude for the welfare of mankind which fully characterizes the Head of the Catholic Church."

Among the many suggestions made by the illustrious Pontiff Leo XIII, in his encyclical on Labor, one has met with such entire approval on the part of both capital and labor that it is today almost universally accepted. This is the recommendation of a living wage. A fair day's work for a fair day's pay according to the principles enunciated by Leo XIII, is now admitted to be simple justice by all.

But there are other suggestions in that epochal document that deserve to be considered by all students of the social question. Pope Leo wrote his encyclical not merely to obtain a living wage for the laborer, but to bring about a permanent solution of the industrial problem.

He trades the grievances of the workman to five prime causes, the abolition of the mediæval guilds, the decay of religion and the consequent disappearance of the Christian solidarity between rich and poor, "rapacious usury," in its various disguises, the wage system, and the concentration of productive wealth. This last named cause is the most far reaching of all; it is this "which has enabled a small group of very rich men to lay on the teeming masses of the laboring poor, a yoke that is little better than slavery."

To remedy the condition of the wage earner, the Pope would remove every one of the causes of trouble. He would have the guilds replaced by associations, he would have a reform of laws and a return to Christian brotherhood, and a spiritual regeneration that would prohibit the exaction of usury and the cutting of wages. But the Holy Father was too wise a student of human nature to think that these motives of themselves would be sufficient to deter men from evil habits so long indulged in. And so he realized that for a permanent remedy, the monopoly of capital must be broken and the worker made independent.

This he pointed out could be accomplished by the diffusion of ownership. This is the most far reaching reform in the encyclical. Compared with all other recommendations are but secondary. However, it does not seem to have received from students the attention which it deserves. Yet it was the great Leo XIII's practical and permanent cure for the evils in the modern industrial system. He says: "the law therefore should favor ownership and its policy because it is to induce as many as possible of the humbler class to become owners. Many excellent results will follow from this. First of all property will become more equally divided; if working people can be encouraged to look forward to obtaining a share in the land, the gulf between vast wealth and sheer poverty will be bridged over, and

the respective classes will be brought nearer together. A further consequence will be greater abundance of the fruits of the earth. Men work harder and more readily when they work on what belongs to them. A third advantage would spring from this; men would cling to the country in which they were born."

But there is an even stronger reason for diffusion of ownership, in the words of the great Social Pontiff: "It is a most sacred law of nature that a father should provide food and all necessities for those whom he has begotten; similarly nature dictates that a man's children should be provided by him with all that is needful to enable them to keep themselves honorably from want and misery amid the uncertainties of this mortal life. Now in no other way can a father effect this except by the ownership of lucrative property, which he can transmit by inheritance to his children. A family no less than a State has equal rights in the pursuit of things needful to its preservation and just liberty. We say at least equal rights for the family is prior in the gathering of men into a community, and must have rights and duties which are prior to those of the community, and founded more immediately on nature." Diffusion of ownership therefore is a prime necessity for the well being of the state as well as for the family.

We must bear in mind that in this encyclical Pope Leo has two sets of remedies to propose, one immediate and urgent, as factory laws and good wages, and such as make the lot of the laborer more tolerable under existing conditions, and the other more remote and calculated to remove the unfortunate distinction at present existing between the possessing and the non-possessing classes. In bringing about this solidarity, in removing the greatest cause of evil, diffusion of ownership was Pope Leo's most important agency.

The Bishop's Pastoral commenting upon Pope Leo's remedy "to induce as many as possible of the humbler classes to become owners" says: "This recommendation is in exact accord with the traditional teaching and practice of the Church. When her social influence was greatest in the later Middle Ages, the prevailing economic system was such that the workers were gradually obtaining a larger share in the ownership of the lands upon which, and the tools with which, they labored. Though the economic arrangements of that time cannot be restored, the underlying principle is of permanent application and is the only one that will give stability to industrial society. It should be applied to our present system as rapidly as conditions will permit."

In a similar vein writes an English student of the Social problem, Father Luens discussing the recent vigorous and trenchant arraignment of modern society by Mr. G. D. Cole, in Chaos and Order in Industry say: "that those who have at heart the welfare of the workers of the country would do well to concentrate their efforts on legislation directed to the threefold end of limiting the amount or value of property which it shall be lawful for an individual to hold, limiting the income which it shall be lawful for any individual to receive; and limiting the profits derivable from investments of whatever kind. Diffusion of ownership was Pope Leo's remedy for the manifold evils of industrialism. It deserves to be more seriously considered by thinkers and writers on the pressing social questions of the day.—The Pilot.

RARE SILVER CROSS STOLEN FROM CHURCH AND MELTED DOWN

Milan, November 17.—Chalice, pyxes and the famous Byzantine silver-gilt cross, which were stolen from the Gravedona parish church on Lake Como, have been melted by a jeweler to whom the thieves sold them, and are forever lost to the world's treasury of art. Antiquarians long regarded the cross as one of the finest specimens of Byzantine craftsmanship. The chalices and pyxes were rare examples of Fourteenth Century artistry.

Through the confession of one of the sacrilegious robbers, it has been learned that a former attendant at the church planned the theft. He explains that he was tempted to commit the crime by the offers he received from numerous English-speaking visitors to purchase the relic at its weight in gold. The culprits probably would have escaped detection but for the fact that one of the three in the robbery dropped a pocketbook containing papers that identified him as a military deserter. They were traced and captured the same evening.

When the police learned the name of the Milan jeweler to whom the precious objects had been sold they hastened to his shop, but were too late. The jeweler had already placed them in a crucible and all were melted.

The Byzantine cross was valued at a million francs. The thieves sold it and the chalices and pyxes for 610 francs.

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