FIVE-MINUTE SERMON

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

HOLY COMMUNION

A certain man made a great supper and invited many. (St. Luke, xiv. 16.)

I suppose every Catholic here to-day, except some young children, has once or many times in his life been to the "Great Supper," and eaten the "Bread of Life" which is served at it; and those little ones of the Lord's Holy Catholic family are looking forward to the bright day, to be for ever afterwards the day of sweetest memory, when they too shall have the honor and happiness—the day of their First Communion.

If such be the case, what is the use of the Church repeating to us every year the threat in the gospel against those who made foolish and selfish excuses for staying away—"None of those men that were called shall taste of My Supper?" We have been called. We have answered the invitation. We have been to the supper. Isn't that enough? The Gospel evidently does not apply to us. But wait a bit. I have two things for you to think about. In the first place, the calling to the Great Supper the Gospel speaks about is a standing invitation for life. By this I mean that the law of the Catholic Church obliges every one to receive Holy Communion annually—that is, during the Easter season. It is then, first of all, an annual invitation; and going one year is not answering the call for the next year. Everyone who has learned his catechism ought to know that. In the second place, what would you think of a near relative whom you had invited to be present at your marriage anniversary dinner, who should send for reply that he had already dined with you on the fourth of July? This is like what people say who, when asked if they made their Easter duty, tell you. "Oh! no, I went at Christmas," or "I was at the mission." Now the annual marriage supper which the King makes for His Son, and to which we are invited, is at Easter, and neither Christmas, mission time, the Forty Hours', nor the Fourth of July will do, unless, indeed, the mission or the Forty Hours' took place in the Pascal season.

The second thing I want you to think about is that the invitation to partake of the "Great Supper" of Holy Communion, whether at Easter or at any other time, is to call to make what is known as a worthy Communion; that is, you must be absolved from sin and thus be yourself worthy. That is requisite, and that is enough. There are some scrupulous people who fancy that they themselves have got to do beforehand all that the Communion is intended to do and will do. Who is it that prepares the Supper, they or the Lord? If they will do the little that is asked of them, they can safely leave to the Lord the responsibility of doing His part. A worthy Communion should also be one that is worth something to the one receiving it, and should not be a worthless exterior performance, which has no interior act of communion in the heart to correspond to it. And now this kind of worth of each and every Communion depends upon what the communicant chooses to make it. All is to be had that God can give. The means of getting the good from Communion is one and the same means for getting the good in receiving other sacraments—that is prayer. Prayer beforehand, prayer during it, prayer afterwards. The more you want and the more you ask of, the more worth will your Communion be. Suppose Our Lord should suddenly quit the sacramental form of the host and ask a communicant at the altar rail, "What do you wish for?" and he should answer, "I don't know; I never thought of asking for anything," you would reasonably conclude that he was not likely to receive very much. Now I hope you who often come to the holy table are paying attention to this. If you come often, it is supposed, and justly supposed, that you want a good deal, and that you are deeply in earnest about obtaining what you desire. Much as, I am sure, your Communions are worth to you, I wish you would set about making them worth still more. In a word, you must think more about what you need. Get your requests ready. Have them, as it were, well by heart, so that if the Lord should ask you what you came for, your reply would come out quick and earnest enough. Of all privileges and honors in this world, receiving Holy Communion is, indeed, something for us Catholics to boast of. How the "outsiders" envy us our faith and the comfort it brings to us!—the infidels of every name and kind, the Protestants and others, who either have no Communion, or at best a sham one. How would you like to have yourself thrust aside and one of them called by the Lord to take your place at His table? Beware, then, how you treat His invitation; come as often and be as well prepared as the Spirit of Divine Love shall inspire you.

Catholics Who Become Cold in Their Religion

The home reading circle should have in it something of God and not so much of the world, its pleasures and its sins. The Catholic book, the Bible, the history of religion, the lives of the saints, the Catholic newspapers, are all means for the development of Christian knowledge, the cultivation of the religious sense and for the instilling of the principles of goodness of life which are necessary for Christian character.

The mind is rendered inert in the defense of religion if it is not strengthened by the reading of the deeds of the champions of the Church and the sayings of its learned men and women and the beautiful deeds of its saints.

Catholics become cold in their religion, lose the knowledge they may have possessed of its doctrine, are unequipped for the moment of contest against wrong by reason of the fact that they never replenish the foundations of their knowledge by reading the good Catholic books, by familiarity with the lives of the saints or by the constant companionship of a good Catholic newspaper.—Bishop Conaty.

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CARDINAL FISCHER ON CATHOLIC ACTION

Our Most Reverend Archbishop, Cardinal Fischer, in his last lenten pastoral touched upon three topics, reference to which will surely prove as interesting to you in America as to us here in Germany. The Cardinal has a reputation for plain speaking, which makes his utterances the more valuable. Referring to co-education he said:

"It is surprising as it is saddening to note how Catholics and even Catholic women, are beginning to advocate co-education especially for the higher schools. It has become the ideal system in the judgment of certain classes of society, just as the so-called sectarian schools are growing in favor among certain Catholics. And yet for a Catholic, the preservation of the purity of morals, to say nothing of other weighty reasons, should prove a decisive argument against co-education.

"The system can be permitted only in small country districts and even in these its evil effects must be prevented by special watchfulness on the part of teachers, parents and priests. Unfortunately, some of our Catholics are so ensnared by the Zeitgeist that they find specious pretexts to recommend an early freedom of mixing on the part of boys and girls to the detriment of delicacy and in contradiction to the traditions of Catholic training."

The Cardinal has something to say as well of the growing influence of Catholic associations. He gives unstinted praise to the activities of the Catholic Volksverein, whose headquarters are in his own episcopal city, and he is full of encouragement in his reference to other organizations flourishing in his diocese, especially the many Catholic working-men's associations. Noting the custom prevailing in these societies to have in the weekly or monthly meetings two addresses, one on some social topic, the other on a point of Catholic apologetics, the Cardinal declares: "It occurs to me too much stress is laid on the apologetic element. It is of course necessary to refute current objections against the Church and her doctrines. But positive teaching, the building up of a systematic knowledge of the truths of our Catholic belief should ever occupy the first place in such addresses. Let the grandeur and beauty of our faith and the glorious achievements of the Catholic past be unfolded before our people to rouse in them an enthusiastic love for our Holy Church. And let our people be urged to nourish this love by the frequent reception of the Sacraments and by assisting at Mass and other ecclesiastical devotions."

The Cardinal in this connection warmly commends the several houses of retreats in his diocese in which Catholic men assemble to follow in solitude the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius. Finally his Eminence touches upon a topic vastly important in every land to-day. "It is commendable," he writes, "to act in concert with the members of other denominations to defend in public life what is common to both, for instance the Christian character of the school, or to ward off the attacks of infidels. But this must not lead to a mixing of religions or to a suppressing of Catholic influence where it should exert itself. If religion disappears from public life, indifferentism will shake the Christian foundation of society. Unfortunately it happens that some of our Catholic people, not having clear ideas on this point, advocate an interdenominationalism which leaves no trace at all of real religion. They even go so far as to avoid the name Catholic; and instead of manfully confessing our Holy Catholic faith they speak of 'the Christian view thus allowing the impression that the Christian view is not of greater value than e. g. 'the atheistic view.' It is high time that we Catholics be proud to profess our Catholic name, that we sedulously seek the Catholic element in every phase of our lives."

A good piece of advice and, as I said, just as needed with you in America as here among us in Germany.—"B." in America.

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SIDELIGHTS ON THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION

In the Saturday Review, a well-known non-Catholic English periodical, we find the following notable admission in a notice of Father Leith's "Memoirs of Scotch Catholics during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:"

"That Scottish Catholics were the victims of a very cruel persecution extending over two centuries cannot be denied, but in popular histories persecution and martyrdom are suffered exclusively by Protestants. . . . It can not be justly claimed that toleration has been in the least promoted by Protestant officials. The volumes before us reveal a constant effort to exterminate Catholics on the part of the Presbyterian ministers with a ferocity far exceeding that of the occasional persecutions by the State. The statements in the letters are largely corroborated by extracts from public records printed in an appendix. Physical torture was rare . . . but every form of social torture was resorted to, when the people could be induced to support it. It often happened, however, that the personal esteem and affection felt by the laity for Catholics, impeded the work of wiping out by preachers. It should be clearly understood that persecution by the State was occasioned or excused by the belief that Catholics were plotting the overthrow of the civil power, and this persecution was occasional; that of the ministers of religion was continuous, being prompted by the conviction that toleration meant the revival of the Catholic faith. Such is the general impression produced on the historical student by letters such as those under review."

Worthy to be bracketed with this quotation is the following from Dr. W. M. Metcalfe's "History of Paisley," which we find in the CATHOLIC RECORD, of London, Ont. Dr. Metcalfe is, the CATHOLIC RECORD infers, a Presbyterian, but in his study of origins he has been so far able to divest himself of preconceived ideas as to see that his fellow-countrymen were not so blessed in the change of religion as the Kirk has striven so hard to make believe. In his hands the boasted enlightenment and freedom of conscience which the Reformation has been credited with bringing to pass, resolves itself into a grinding tyranny which well nigh made the country joyless. He says:

"As at first managed, the Protestant Church in Scotland was not an unmixed blessing. It contributed little toward the development of human thought and freedom, or to the elevation of the minds of men. The intolerant spirit by which it was pervaded, made Scotland a very hot-bed of fanaticism and superstition, in which narrowness of thought and fierceness of opinions found a congenial soil. As the seventeenth century advances, the picture darkens, and intolerant as Knox and his followers were, when we have again to take up the story of the Church in Paisley, while we shall again find it no worse than it was elsewhere, we shall meet with, in their successors, men quite as intolerant as they were, if not more so."

Which leads a leading organ of English higher public opinion, the Athenaeum, to remark:

"There is no getting away from the chilling, dehumanizing tyranny of the Scottish Kirk in these local histories."—Sacred Heart Review.

MOVEMENT TO CANONIZE BERNADETTE OF LOURDES

SAINTLY LIFE OF FRENCH PEASANT GIRL DESCRIBED TO THE POPE—THE EXHUMATION OF HER BODY

Msgr. du Vauroux, Bishop of Agen, France, had addressed a letter to the Holy Father begging the Pontiff to introduce the cause of the canonization of Bernadette Soubirous, the humble and ignorant child who was honored by the miraculous apparition of Lourdes. Bernadette, says the Bishop, was a saint in her life, quite apart from these supernatural manifestations. He writes:

During the eight years that, by a manifest disposition of the Divine Providence, she lived at Lourdes after the memorable events of 1858, she ceased not to grow in the practice of the most beautiful and the most austere virtues. In this she had grave difficulties to overcome. Deeply humble, avoiding as much as possible the indiscreet curiosity of the crowd eager to know her, to hear and to see her; unshakable in her refusal, sometimes heroic, to accept presents which might have solaced the misery of her family; simple and upright, firm and courageous in her replies to the insidious and complicated questions of the representatives of public authority; unmoved by all threats, by all self-interest, by any motive of a human order, she showed by her attitude, her words, and her conduct, that the Spirit of God inspired and ruled her entire being.

As Soeur Marie-Bernard, the child of 1858 had only one aim, to please her Heavenly Bridegroom, and the Virgin who deigned to name herself gloriously to her: "the Immaculate Conception." She prays much, she never fails in obedience, she endures patiently in body and in soul long and cruel trials. Two virtues seem more intimately dear to her, a truly-angelic purity, and the love of the hidden life. When, on the 16th of April, 1879, aged barely thirty-five years, the privileged child heard again the call of the august Mother, who had promised to make her happy in the Eternal Home, her soul had reached the heights attained only by those marked by God with a special sign of His love. "Bernadette is a saint," whispered all, before the funeral couch of the humble religious.

From the Bishop's House, Nevers, France, has been issued the following statement describing the appearance of the remains of Bernadette after exhumation:

The body of Bernadette had lain thirty years in the tomb when, on the 22nd of September, 1909, in the presence of Msgr. Gauthey, Bishop of Nevers, and of the members of the tribunal of the cause of the servant of God, after the accomplishment of the legal formalities, and with the assistance of two doctors of medicine, the exhumation was effected. The coffin was taken out of the vault by the workmen sworn in for the purposes of this commission, and carried into a building hard by the Chapel of St. Joseph. Here, the coffin was opened. The tribunal found that no unpleasant smell came forth when the leaden shell was cut open. The servant of God was clothed in her religious habit. The face, the hands, and the forearms alone were uncovered, and were of a pure white. The mouth, slightly open, permitted the teeth to be seen; the closed eyes seemed slightly sunk in their sockets. The hands crossed over the breast, perfectly preserved with their nails, were interlaced with a rosary eaten by rust. A crucifix covered with verdigris lay on the breast.

The Superioress General of the "Sisters of Charity of Nevers" (the congregation to which Bernadette belonged, not the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul) and her nuns removed the damp habit and the sawdust mixed with charcoal which surrounded the body, and they, as also the medical men, found that it was shrivelled ("desseche") and as it were, like parchment, but completely whole, and without trace of corruption. It was firm, so that the Sisters could turn and return it, and carry it to a white bed prepared for that purpose. The sawdust, blackened by the charcoal, had itself blackened the skin where in contact with it.

The Sisters washed the body, and replaced it with delicate care in a new coffin with a zinc shell, and lined with white silk. To be absolutely exact, we must add that the body, exposed to the air during several hours, had somewhat blackened. The commission was able, before the coffin was again closed, to contemplate the servant of God clothed in new garments, and replaced exactly in the position in which she had been found. By the side of the body was placed, in a crystal phial, a duly attested deed with the account of the exhumation, and of the recognition of the body, together with the original act of burial.

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PRAYER TO THE SAINTS

Why do we pray to the saints? We shock our Protestant friends by so doing. Some of them like to be shocked as the shock makes them more complacent. The publican evidently provided the Pharisee with a text and an excuse for self-flattery. But all the same, the Pharisee was a whitened sepulchre.

Well, why do we pray to the saints? Because they are the special friends and children of God, and because the Apostles' Creed gives us the article, "I believe in the Communion of Saints." Praying to them is the logical outcome of our belief in that article.

On this subject Father Russell, S. J., says:

Heresy pretends to be scandalized at the excess of our devotion to the saints; but alas! we know ourselves better. If the matter were not so terribly serious, we might be almost amused at the solicitude of this class of Protestants, and we might say to one of them: "Really, my good friend, you need not be much alarmed. If you but knew how seldom we think of St. Joseph (for instance)—how seldom we pray to him, and when we do, how coldly—even you would be satisfied, and you would see how very far we stop short of anything approaching to idolatrous worship. Ah! we have not the slightest fear of going too far, and we have a very great fear of not going nearly far enough."

The Lord invites us to pray and promises all things to prayer: "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find," etc.

We are quite well aware that if we can enlist the saints in our behalf that we stand a better chance from their merits than from our many demerits. Whom would God hear if not them—the true, the tried and the chosen ones, and above all His Immaculate Mother and His devoted foster-father, St. Joseph?

The wireless petition is swift and brings a response if we prepare for that response. Do not mind the Protestants. They do not know what they say. They are to be pitied—as the blind are to be pitied. They have not the supernatural vision of Catholic faith. We should not act as though we had no faith.—Catholic Universe.

CATHOLICITY IN HIS BLOOD

Editor Catholic Standard and Times:

In a recent issue of your paper an account is given by "Veritas" of an Irish convert who seemed to have been essentially a Catholic from his birth. Perhaps it will be of interest to your readers to know that this is not the only case of its kind. I do not know how my ancestors became Protestants, but my grandfather was born in Ireland and was a Presbyterian clergyman. I was brought up amid the most Protestant influences, but I never believed in Protestantism. My honest belief was that Protestantism was only a necessary evil endured by its adherents because they had been so unfortunate as not to have been baptized in the Catholic Church when they were babies. I looked upon their denunciations as sour grapeism, and really supposed that if the Catholic Church would only let them they would be as glad to rush into her arms as I was. Alas! how little I suspected that her arms were even then held out to me.

I was so dissatisfied with the manner of worship to which I was accustomed that I used to try and construct in my imagination a more fitting manner to make my attendance at church less like listening to a lecture, and since becoming a Catholic I have been struck with the fact that this yearning of my childhood exactly corresponded to the Catholic idea of priest, altar and sacrifice—something which at that time I had never seen.

So great was my longing for the Church that I always wished people to think me a Catholic, and sometimes I fear I did not keep within the bounds of truth in inculcating such a mistake. And to this day, when I see little Catholic children going to church or otherwise practicing their religion, and remember what it would have meant to me had I had their privileges when I was a child the punishment which the Church inflicted upon the beginners of Protestantism, where she was able to punish them, present nothing that calls for apology or explanation.

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PADLOCKING CHURCH

In large cities, during the summer months, many Protestant churches are closed and no religiously disposed person need apply for admission to say a prayer or examine his conscience. Commenting on this, Julius Chambers, a journalist in the Brooklyn Eagle, writes:

"Ministers often set the example of abstention by going away themselves for three or four months at a stretch. Think of the incalculable moral peril in which they place those of their followers who would wish to sit under their ministration. Think of the mental distress that any one of us will suffer if we have to die in summer time, without the consolations of religion as dispensed by our beloved teacher.

"I tell you, it is not a joke for a devout man, compelled to remain in the city during the heated term, to be told he is going to die. One minister after another may be called up on the telephone; faithful friends, dashing hither and thither in vain, may seek the desired peacemaker, but unless the sufferer be a Catholic, he will have to ask some friend to read the prayers for the dying and to take him in his human arms, since the heavenly ones are afar.

"It is just to say of the Catholic churches that they are never closed and that some priest is always at his post of duty. As a Protestant I am glad to state a fact. We do not hear that attendance at the churches of that denomination is decreasing. No, indeed! And the reason is the unflagging devotion of the priesthood to their duties. They do not shut their churches and vanish.

"The padlocking of the Protestant churches is almost wicked. Very often during an active life in this city I have wished for a few minutes' prayerful meditation, and have always sought a Catholic Church. There, undisturbed by other worshipers equally intent upon securing heavenly aid, I have always found peace and mental refreshment. Many Protestants are known to me who never pass St. Patrick's Cathedral without entering for a brief self-examination. It is a glorious privilege."—Intermountain Catholic.

THE OUTSIDERS

WHY THEY DO NOT COME INTO THE CHURCH

General Russell Thayer in a lecture before the Knights of Columbus in Philadelphia, said that one of the reasons more unrestful spirits do not seek peace in the Catholic Church is because they are ignorant of its doctrines.

I can speak of this matter from personal experience, he said, as for the space of thirty-five years I belonged with those of whom I am speaking and who know not the entire truth of the Christian religion as taught unchangeably for nineteen hundred years by the representative of God on earth, His Church; and I can, therefore, in a manner understand and appreciate the position of many of our friends who sincerely and honestly follow the teachings of various forms of Protestantism, and I know that in the majority of cases their difficulties are entirely due to ignorance of the true teachings of the Catholic religion, and those of them that abuse and oppress the Church in many cases "know not what they do."

It is, therefore, our duty to inform ourselves of the truth of the doctrines of our Holy Mother the Church, in order that on the proper occasions we may be able to explain to inquiries that may at times be made of us the truths of the Catholic religion. God looks upon each one of us to assist in a proper way to bring our brothers into the true faith, and many are the occasions where a single word of explanation by us would go a long way in the removal of the cloud of doubt and misrepresentation that hinders our friends from seeing the beauty of the Spouse of Christ.

Men of the Catholic Church, divine faith is a gift from God and is a treasure which we should all strive to nourish and maintain, and the Catholic religion is that pearl of great price which a man, having found, he should prize above all other things.

Are Given Back to God

We cannot make better use of the goods of this earth than to devote them to works of charity. By so doing we, in a certain sense, return them to God, Who is their source and the end to which everything should be directed.—St. Vincent de Paul.

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