

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. M. BOSSAERT

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

GOD'S JUSTICE TOWARDS SINNERS

We read in today's Gospel that our divine Redeemer wept over Jerusalem, that unhappy city, so hardened in sin, because He foresaw its terrible destiny. His tears bear witness to His divine justice, and they were shed also for every sinner who refuses to listen to God's warnings and admonitions, or to the voice of preachers and confessors, and waste the time of grace and repentance, putting off his conversion until the end of his life. Such an one will perish because he fails to recognize the days of his visitation, of admonition and of grace. God's justice requires that this should be so. Let us today consider how this justice is displayed in God's dealings with sinners.

1. God is merciful;—this is stated on almost every page of Holy Scripture. His mercy embraces heaven and earth, and includes even the most hardened sinners, as we see from the fact that our Saviour wept over the sinful city of Jerusalem. But God's mercy is tempered with justice, for He is infinitely just, as well as infinitely merciful. His justice, constrains Him to require every man as he deserves, and our divine Redeemer, in speaking of the day of judgment, proclaimed this fact, for He said that the good would be rewarded, but the evil would hear the terrible sentence: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." Even here on earth God often punishes and rewards in such a way as to reveal His justice. We have an instance of just punishment in the destruction of Jerusalem, the city that knew not the time of its visitation and would not perceive what would be its fate, not even on the day when our Lord in all His meekness and humility entered the gates whence He was soon to come forth, bearing the heavy Cross amidst the jeers of the citizens. Jerusalem continued in sin until at length God's mercy was exhausted, and His justice was brought down by the crimes of the wicked city, just as once it had consumed Sodom and Gomorrah.

2. We must not be astonished if God's justice constrains Him to punish hardened sinners; for if He invariably showed mercy and never inflicted punishment, He would wrong the good who suffer much at the hands of the wicked and He would actually encourage the evil to defy Him by continuing their sins and vices. When God punishes and condemns, He does so because sinners practically compel Him to punish them. He desires not the death of a sinner, but a sinner desires his own death, and demands it, as it were, of God's justice. God acts like a king bringing a criminal to trial and condemning him to death in accordance with the law. In His compassion He would spare the wrong-doer, but He is prevented by justice, that has already given sentence against the sinner, and by the fact that mercy is true mercy only when it can be exercised without injury to justice.

3. We must never presumptuously rely upon God's mercy when doing so involves a violation of His justice. Men are very prone to presumption of this kind. "God is a loving Father," they say, "He is sure to forgive me," and so they go on heaping sin upon sin, not thinking that this loving Father is also a stern and just Judge.—O, you who continue presumptuously in your sins, always pleading in excuse for them that God is merciful, beware lest you share the fate of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.—God's vengeance fell suddenly upon the wretched city, when it was besieged by the Romans; many thousands perished by the sword, and still more died of starvation. It is gross presumption and a sin crying to heaven for vengeance, when a man persists in evil, relying on God's mercy. In such a case a habit of sin is quickly formed, and this gives rise to obstinacy and despair, that lead to hell. Our Lord shed tears over Jerusalem, but He did not save it; He wept over the city, but nevertheless He allowed it to be destroyed. In His mercy God is now calling you to do penance and be converted; if you do not obey and obey quickly, misery as great as that which fell upon Jerusalem may be your lot, and you too may perish suddenly and forever. The God who did not spare a whole city and nation, but was obliged to sacrifice them to His justice, will not spare any sinner, when the measure of his guilt is filled up. We ought then to remember God's justice, and not rely presumptuously on His mercy. Let us anticipate His judgment by doing penance and earnestly striving to amend whatever has been amiss in our lives hitherto. Fear, a wholesome fear of sin and of God's justice, not a slavish fear, ought to accompany us through life, and then we shall some day meet in heaven and the throne of the Father of Mercies. Amen.

How sweet it will be to die after having had devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus—of Him who will be our Judge.—Blessed Margaret Mary.

Do not believe that your friends are untrue to you because they do not agree with you in all things. A friendship that flatters only and praises is insincere.

THE SACRED HEART AND THE HOLY EUCHARIST

When we think of the Divine Heart we turn instinctively to the altar whereon Jesus lives in His Most Holy Sacrament. The Most Blessed Sacrament and the Sacred Heart devotion are so closely allied as to be inseparable. Divine love has given to us the Rib, the Cross and the Altar, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the symbol of that infinite love. The love of God for His unworthy, ungrateful creatures is a mystery. It is true that the souls of men have been created after the image and likeness of God, but in the great majority of cases, even after having been rescued from the dominion of Satan by the Sacrament of Baptism, they are soon tarnished by faults and offenses, sinned in sin. Why then, should the Divine Being, to whose perfections nothing can be added, seek with such perseverance the love and service of His unwilling creature, strive by every loving device to win his heart's affections and complain so touchingly that in return for His Heart's love, He receives only coldness and indifference? Truly it is a mystery of Divine Love.

If our faith did not enlighten us, who could believe in the mystery of the Incarnation, the Passion, the Crucifixion? That the Eternal God should take on Himself the form of a human mother in a poor stable and grow up as other children, should live among men as the son of humble parents and be known as the carpenter's apprentice, should when His time had come, work wonderful miracles of healing and preach the most sublime doctrine only to receive in return hatred, contempt, outrageous insults, tortures and in the end the most ignominious death of the cross, is a fact of which the only explanation is God's love for men. Still more did the God-Man's love for his adopted brethren require of Him. Well did He know the inconsistency of human hearts, even of those who might believe in Him and His Church. Unless He constantly abided in that Church and among men, He foresaw that soon the Redemption which He had accomplished would become merely a matter of history and its effects would not be applied to the souls of the multitudes for whom He died. Therefore He gave His promise: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world," and that His word might be fulfilled literally, on the night before His Passion He changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood, giving at the same time His power and the command to His Apostles and their legitimate successors unto the end of time, to do as He had done.—Do this in remembrance of Me. Thus was instituted the Holy Eucharist, thus does Jesus gain His desire to be always with the children of men.

It might well be conceived that in response to this infinite redemptive love of Our Divine Lord in remaining constantly as a prisoner in the tabernacle, in permitting Himself to be given in Holy Communion, to be carried to the sick and exposed at times for adoration, that His temples would be filled constantly with devout worshippers and that no one without the lights of faith had been given, would esteem any privilege as great as that of remaining in His Divine presence. He does not ask us for the time devoted to the duties of our state in life nor that we should forego a reasonable amount of recreation and pleasure, but He is pleased if, even for a little while, we visit Him our best friend. He has done every thing that even a God could do to save men from the consequences of their own folly and wickedness and daily many thousand times over He is working the most stupendous of all miracles to remain in our midst for our consolation and strength. He has permitted Himself to be trampled under foot by sacrilegious monsters, to be given in unworthy communions to souls in the state of mortal sin, to be insulted by the irreverent behavior of non-believers who visit the church to admire its architectural beauty but not to adore the Lord of the Temple, to be forgotten by many who claim to believe in His Real Presence,—all this He has endured, that those who really do love Him and try to follow in His footsteps may always find Him ready to give Himself to them in real and spiritual Communion, to console them in their afflictions and to fortify their souls with all the courage and grace necessary for their passage through this vale of tears.

What ingratitude if even those, upon whom He has lavished His choicest gifts, should become cold in their service and forgetful of His goodness! If we have ever done a favor for another and have been repaid by unthankfulness or perhaps by injury, we know what a sting it has left in our soul. If our little grievances can thus hurt us, how deep must be the wound produced in the sensitive Heart of Jesus by the colossal ingratitude of mankind in general and of that portion in particular who are known as members of His one true Church. But the most severe pang is caused by those whom He would call special friends, who have been dedicated to His service, on whom He has spent His choicest gifts and holiest inspirations, and who are still selfish, unmindful of His interests and lukewarm in their love towards Him. In His revela-

tion to Blessed Margaret Mary, Jesus asks for reparation and atonement for all the injuries, insults, coldness and indifference He has experienced in all the centuries of His silent imprisonment in the tabernacle. He begs from each soul that it will love Him more and serve Him better. He wants our heart's best affections. To gain them He has exposed His own Sacred Heart, pierced and bleeding and consumed by the flames of His infinite love. He has made the most magnificent promises to all who will themselves practice and promote in others devotion to this Divine Heart of Love. But to please Him our devotion must be sincere and practical and not a mere sentiment. It must prove itself by a more rigorous self-denial, by an increase of good-will towards our neighbor, and by a greater zeal for the extension of God's kingdom on earth. If we shall bring forth such fruits of piety within us, many sweet and comforting messages will be whispered to our souls when we converse with the Sacred Heart of Jesus in His Sacrament of Love.—Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.

SUFFERED TERRIBLE AGONY

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tion to Blessed Margaret Mary, Jesus asks for reparation and atonement for all the injuries, insults, coldness and indifference He has experienced in all the centuries of His silent imprisonment in the tabernacle. He begs from each soul that it will love Him more and serve Him better. He wants our heart's best affections. To gain them He has exposed His own Sacred Heart, pierced and bleeding and consumed by the flames of His infinite love. He has made the most magnificent promises to all who will themselves practice and promote in others devotion to this Divine Heart of Love. But to please Him our devotion must be sincere and practical and not a mere sentiment. It must prove itself by a more rigorous self-denial, by an increase of good-will towards our neighbor, and by a greater zeal for the extension of God's kingdom on earth. If we shall bring forth such fruits of piety within us, many sweet and comforting messages will be whispered to our souls when we converse with the Sacred Heart of Jesus in His Sacrament of Love.—Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.

GOD'S HOLINESS AND JUSTICE

Between holiness and justice there can be drawn no sharp line of demarcation. Justice is a comprehensive term and is used often to signify the sum of all the virtues. Particularly close, however, is its connection with holiness; so close, in fact, that the terms justice and holiness are used interchangeably. We find many instances of this in Holy Scripture. Among others there might be mentioned that in which St. Joseph is spoken of in the Gospels as "a just man" meaning, of course, that he was faithful to the laws of God and hence that he was holy. For in this consists holiness. Anyone who strives continually to obey the higher moral law and to keep himself free from all moral guilt, who loves what is good and hates what is evil, is a man of sanctity; more or less, according to the strength of his efforts and the amount of success that is his. He may not be deemed worthy of canonization; nevertheless, he is on the road that leads to it.

In God, holiness, as we should naturally expect, is something entirely different from the same quality in His creatures. God is holy of Himself, while His creatures derive whatever measures of sanctity they may have from Him through their own efforts. His sanctity is immutable, it cannot be increased nor diminished while in His creatures not only can it be increased and diminished, but it can be lost. The holiness of God is nothing else than His own Divine Will acting in conformity with His perfections. He is all holy in Himself, and because of this fact He loves good and hates evil. The holiness of man consists in obeying the law of God, while the holiness of God is God, because He is a law unto Himself.

When we say that God is holy, we consider Him as existing free from all moral evil. It is impossible for Him to do any wrong. He is God, and that is enough. To us that name stands for the greatest possible goodness and holiness. God is His attributes, it is true, but some of them seem to stand out more prominently than others. And it is this attribute of holiness that we seem to regard as His primary perfection. When the ancients wished to refer to God, they gave Him a name signifying power and greatness. With the coming of Christ and the preaching of the Gospel of love, man's views changed and they began to think of God as Goodness and Holiness. Perhaps this explains our name of "God." For, in the old Anglo Saxon, God and good are the same word. And it may be that the name has been given to God because He is primarily good.

Almighty, Who was, and who is, and Who is to come." They do not extol His supremacy, His power, His majesty. With joy, they sing His praises because of His infinite glory, His infinite goodness, His infinite holiness. They include, as one, all His perfections in His Divine Will, loving the Good that is Himself, and hating evil with so strong a hate that nothing sterner in the least can so much as begin to approach Him.

As His creatures He loves us, and He calls us to Him. But in order to be acceptable in His sight we must be holy. It is His Holy Will that we should one day join the choir of angels and enjoy with them the happiness of living forever in His presence. It is for this that He urges us to be holy. "Be ye holy as I am holy." If we follow His example we shall receive the reward of the eternal kingdom, not because we shall have any right to it in justice, but simply because He has promised it to those who obey His command. And, being holy, He will not break His promise.

GOD IS JUST

He is then a just God. Who renders to each one according to his works. He shows His love of good and hatred of evil by rewarding those who do good and punishing those who persevere in the opposite course. In doing this He can truthfully say: "Friend, I do thee no wrong." No man has any privilege to question His actions or decisions. No matter how much good we may do, still we can never earn the reward that He has promised us. It always remains a gift of His bounty to which we have absolutely no right except from fidelity, because of our Divine promise. We have no right to question His decisions nor criticize His judgments. He is the great All-knowing and All-loving God, we are His humble servants. We are as clay in His Hands, to be moulded as He sees fit. Why then should we dare to presume upon His Goodness by searching into the reasons for His Actions? Instead, we should humbly admit: "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right."

This is the thought that will stand us in good stead when the dark days come upon us, those days that sooner or later enter into the lives of all of us, when the cross is laid on our shoulders a little more heavily and we feel thrust down to earth, unable so much as to lift our eyes to Heaven. But there is then nothing to prevent us from lifting up our minds and hearts to God in prayer, to ask Him for strength to bear up under the burden and light to see things as He sees them. Unless we do this, we shall find ourselves giving way to despair and accusing God of injustice. We shall find ourselves pouring out words of blasphemy where we should be uttering words of fervent appeal for help.

The proper perspective in which to view the justice of God is that of our own nothingness and unworthiness. From this vantage point we can see things with their correct light and shade. Having nothing of ourselves, we owe all to God. Deserving of nothing from Him, He gives us much. Let us accept gratefully whatever He sends us, whether it is to our liking or not, remembering only that God is not unjust. And if He sometimes sends us a heavy cross, He has His reasons that we must not seek to know. Only let us ask Him for the grace sufficient to bear it for our own benefit. Then we may rest assured that all will be well, for His Holiness and justice will not permit Him to do aught else for us than what is for our own good.—Brooklyn Tablet.

The life of a great people is both inward and outward. It is a life of the spirit, and it is a life of action; and the greatness of a race is determined by the depth and volume of its life in the spirit and the adequacy of its action to express that life. There is in the heart of every race a group of ideas which may be called ideals, since they express the passions, the

faults and the aspirations of the people. There is also in the same race a power of action, an executive ability, a skill in doing; and the real national problem is the co-ordination of those two sides of life; the side of ideas and the side of action. We live in our ideas; we express our ideas by the things we do.—Hamilton W. Mabie.

Like Sam and Japhet cover the faults of others, rather than point to them like Cham.



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If you wish to be loved by Jesus, become humble and gentle like Him.—Blessed Margaret Mary.

Little by little slight dislikes grow into animosities and eat away the vitals of friendship.

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