

FIVE-MINUTE SERMONS.

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.

OUR NEIGHBORS.

"And who is my neighbor?" (St. Luke xvi.)

There are two opposite faults to both of which almost everybody is more or less inclined. The first of these is meddling with other people's business; the second is shirking one's own.

It is rather the second of these than the first which is rebuked in the Gospel of to-day in the persons of the priest and the Levite who went by without helping the poor wounded man.

Now, in the first place, let me explain what I mean by shirking one's own business or duties. It is not simply leaving them undone and expecting that they will remain so; but it is putting off what one ought to do one's self on to somebody else, and expecting somebody else to do it for you. So it is, you see, just the opposite of meddling, which is trying to do somebody else's duty for him when he would prefer to do it himself.

Now, this shirking was just what the priest and Levite were guilty of. I do not suppose that our Lord meant to describe them as really hard-hearted men, willing to let the poor man die rather than help him; but they said to themselves: "Oh! this is not my business particularly; there are plenty of other people passing along this road all the time, and I am a little hurried now. I have got a deal to attend to, and there will be somebody coming this way before long. Five minutes or so will not make much difference; and perhaps there is not so much the matter with the man after all. It may be his own fault. Very likely he has been drinking. At any rate, he has got no special claim on me."

This is a very natural state of mind for a person to get into, and how common it is, in such a case as this, we can see from the common proverb that "Everybody's business is nobody's business."

There are very many good works that really are everybody's business, that everybody ought to do something towards at least, but which are in great danger of not being done at all on account of this habit of shirking, which is so common. And the ones which are most in this danger are those of the kind of which this Gospel gives us an example; that is, works of charity toward our neighbor. People say to themselves, just as the priest and Levite did: "Oh! there are plenty of other people that can attend to this matter a great deal better and easier than I can. I am sure it will be done somehow or other. Such things always are attended to. I don't feel specially called on to help in it."

Well, this might be all very good if those people did really help in some things generously, and the case before them was one of a very urgent need. Of course we cannot contribute to everything. But the difficulty is, that too often we find them shirking, not occasionally, but all the time. If a poor man comes to the door, or a collection is taken for the poor in the church, they say to themselves: "The St. Vincent de Paul Society can look out for those things; I am sure they must have money enough. I shall do my duty if I put a few pennies in the poor-box now and then. If contributions are called for in times of famine or pestilence they say: 'There is plenty coming in to supply all that is wanted; I can see that by the papers. They can get along very well without me.' And so it goes all the way through. They do not give anything to anybody or do anything for anybody—that is, nothing to speak of without getting a return for it. They will go to picnics, fairs, or amusements for a charitable object; but when it comes to doing anything simply for the love of their neighbor, that is left for somebody else.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

Home-Made Sunshine.

What care I what the weather may be, Cold or warm—is the same to me. For my dear home skies—they are always blue; And my dear home weather—the glad days is 'neath a summer' from morn till night, And my feet walk ever in love's true light.

And why? Well, here is my baby sweet, Following me round on his restless feet, Smiling on me thro' his soft blue eyes, And gladdening and brightening my in-door skies.

And baby's father, with fond, true heart (To baby and me, home's better part)— His face is sunshine, and we're in the music heard in his loving voice.

So why should we heed—as the days go by— The gloom or the light of the weather and sky Of the outside world, when we're busy all day, Manufacturing sunshine which fades not away?

With smiles, with kisses, with peace and with joy, Father and mother and baby-boy— We are living each day in the sunshine we make— And God keep us and guide us for love's dear sake!

To Boys Going to Work.

Be on hand promptly in the morning at your employer's place of business and make it a point never to be late, and perform cheerfully every duty.

Be respectful to your employers and all in authority over you, and be polite to every one. Politeness costs nothing, and it will help you wonderfully in getting along in the world.

And, above all, be honest and truthful. The boy who starts in life with a sound mind and a sound body, who falls into no bad habits, who is honest, truthful and industrious, who remembers with grateful love his father and mother, and who does not grow away from the Church, has qualities of mind and heart that will insure him success to a remarkable degree, even though he is endowed with only ordinary mental capacity; for honor, truth and industry are more than genius.

Don't be foppish in your dress, and don't buy anything before you have the money to pay for it. Shun billiard saloons, and be careful how you spend your evenings. Cultivate your taste for reading, and read only good books.

With a love for reading you will find in books friends ever true and full of cheer in times of gloom, and sweet companionship for lonely hours. Other friends may grow cold and forsake you, but books are always the same.

And in closing, boys, I would say again that with truth, honesty and industry, and a living faith in God, you will succeed.

"Honor and shame on no condition rise, Act well your part: there all the honor lies."

A Boy Confessor.

An interesting and very curious anecdote is told by good Father Robert Plowden, who was for many years priest of Bristol, England.

A certain young midshipman, who was a member of the ancient Faith, when making a voyage contracted a strong friendship with a Protestant boy in the same service. Our nautical "Damon and Pythias" were each about fourteen years of age, and for prudent reasons the former had not made known his creed to the latter.

When faraway on the high seas, the Catholic lad fell dangerously ill, and was sedulously waited upon by his mate, the Protestant "middy." All medical skill proving of no avail, the poor boy was rapidly approaching death's door, when he drew nearer to his faithful friend, in whom there seems to have been apparent a simple piety in which he could confide. Accordingly, he bravely told him that he was a Catholic and that the nearer death approached the firmer he clung to his faith. He must have deeply astonished his mate by the startling news that, as no priest, or even Catholic, was at hand he wished to make his confession to him. Then by an effort, unusual and heroic, the poor lad poured his tale into the ear of his sad friend. He told him, however, to keep it well in his mind, and then repeat the full confession of sins he had made to him to good Father Plowden, as soon as ever the ship should reach Bristol. Then giving him the priest's address, he bade him a long adieu, and breathed his last.

The Protestant "middy," sad at the loss of his mate, kept true to his word, so carefully pledged, and daily recalled to mind the duty committed to him. On landing at Bristol, he made straight to the old priest's house, and told Father Plowden the dying request of his dear old friend, relating how the latter had lamented his inability to get shriven by a priest, and how he had solemnly warned him: "Remember the confession I make to you, and, on reaching the port go, and relate the whole to Father Plowden, word for word." But here the young sailor stopped. He thought, and paused, but in vain did he bid his memory to give up the confession once told to him. Then, in confusion, he told the priest that though he had often thought of it, as his dying friend had desired him, yet it had all vanished from his mind. The old priest came quickly to his assistance, and relieved him of all anxiety, informing the boy that there was no necessity to try to tell him the confession. Then he added, that his dying friend had done a brave act, and that one which was not required of him; yet that doubtless his humility, thus severely tested, had procured a speedy pardon from an all-merciful God.

The priest spoke so kindly, and so wisely, that other visits were paid to the presbytery, the doctrines of the Church were explained, and the "middy" started on his next voyage a devout Catholic. Still, as he kept to the navy, he never received faculties to "shrive" a penitent, and this dying mate's confession was the first and last he was ever called upon to hear.

Ruth's Marguerites.

A new church had been built in the little village of Lamma. It was a neat little edifice, dedicated to the Sacred Heart and the good people of its congregation were very proud of it. Not only did they prize it because of its appearance, but because its erection insured them weekly instead of monthly divine service, as had been the rule previously. Now that a suitable church was built, the pastor, who resided at a place somewhat larger, four miles distant, drove over every Sunday and gave the country people around the welcome opportunity of hearing last Mass.

The lamps in the church were cleaned and trimmed every Sunday afternoon by a band of the girls. Everything was nicely dusted, and, best of all, each girl had chosen one Sunday on which she had promised to bring flowers for the altar. Such beautiful flowers as had been sent or brought! One of the girls had come one day with beautiful lilies that looked so white and pure; another had sent great velvety roses, and every Sunday now they all wondered what could be brought that would be finer than the previous ones.

Ruth Sackett was perfectly miserable; the next Sunday was to be hers, and they had no flower garden at her house. She had hoped to sell berries enough to get a little money to buy some flowers, but the weather had turned cool and the berries had not ripened. What could she do? Here it was Friday, and she had not a flower, nor a penny.

She had gone to the woods, after a fashion she had when in trouble. As she walked along where it was a little open, she gathered her hands full of large white marguerites.

She had reached the road and was crossing it to go into the farther woods, when a buggy came by containing a lady and a little girl who looked so white and wan that Ruth knew she must have been sick.

She reached both hands toward the flowers. "O, mamma!" she cried, "see those dear marguerites; the last Sunday we were at home, they had the church decorated with them, and they looked so lovely."

A sudden idea came to Ruth. She reached the handful of flowers to the speaker, and as soon as the sick girl had thanked her and driven on, she ran as fast as she could, gathered her arms full of larger and more beautiful ones.

That night when she came home, she dragged an old tub out to the pump and filled it with water, and in that she carefully placed the flowers. The next morning she was out before the grass was dry, and came home with her arms full again; then she sat down and thought. Her artistic little soul, always so thwarted and crushed, saw a picture of the sanctuary, with marguerites everywhere, as if they had grown there. All day she thought and pondered, but at night her face looked bright and happy, as she sat on the pump platform and tied the flowers in bunches of equal size, leaving the largest and finest ones loose, however.

She had stopped long enough to go to the church and help with the dusting and the lamps, and bring home, as each girl did when her turn came, the great key. Just as they came away she heard a girl say, in a half whisper: "Hm! she can't get any flowers."

Ruth went home hurt and chilled, but she remembered the verse about the cup of cold water, and as she sat down by her marguerites, she buried her face in them with a little prayer.

The next morning everybody was surprised. The whole front of the altar was one mass of swaying, bending marguerites, with the largest ones in vases near the tabernacle. No one knew how it was done except Ruth, who had gone back and forth from her home to the church until the block seemed very long, and had worked as if she were making a picture that she could see in her mind all the time. It was an artistic triumph, and when at the close of service a strange lady from the great city, who had come to the little country place to visit a friend, came to Ruth, and told her she would some day be an artist, and that she herself was coming to see her grand-mother and talk with her about Ruth's education, the young girl was so glad that she came near crying before everybody.

It all came true, and Ruth did study, and became a great artist, and if you ever see a picture with a tiny marguerite in the corner and the letters R. and S. above and below it, you will know that is the artist about whom we have told you this story.

Courtesy Sweetens Life.

It has been often said by observers of children, that the great fault of boys is selfishness, and of girls deceit. We have spoken before on the evils and ugliness of selfishness and perhaps a few words on the fault attributed to girls will not come amiss. First, what is deceit? The dictionary tells us that the word means "leading another person to believe what is false." But we do not look in the dictionary for the meaning of virtue and vice; we must search our own hearts for the real definitions of our good and bad qualities.

The particular form of deceit which girls are said to practice is what one little boy calls "talking sweet to your face and running you down when you ain't around." Boys do not manage their affairs in the same way. "No, indeed," replies the little man, contemptuously, "if we have anything to say to a fellow, we say it out, and if he doesn't like it, we fight it out."

Now, we know a great many girls

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Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

(August 15.) On this great festival the Church commemorates the happy departure of the Blessed Virgin out of this world into Heaven, the consummation of all the sublime mysteries which render her life so wonderful, and the crowning of all the eminent virtues which we admire in particular on her other festivals.

It is a very ancient tradition that soon after her death the Blessed Virgin's body was reunited to her blessed soul, and assumed or taken up into Heaven by a singular privilege before the general resurrection which is to take place at the end of the world.

Was it not becoming that the immaculate body of the Mother of God should be preserved from the corruption of the grave? St. Augustine tells us that he could not entertain the idea of the corruption of the body of the Blessed Virgin, and that it would be shocking to express it. Several other holy doctors of the Church are of the same opinion and do not hesitate to assert that a preservation from the corruption of death and a speedy assumption to glory was due to the body of the Mother of God.

The Church, in instituting and observing this feast, wishes to remind us that we have a benevolent and powerful Mother in Heaven, who is both willing and able to intercede with our Divine Son in our favor, and to come to our aid in all our necessities. There is no grace but we may hope for from the divine mercy through her intercession, provided we render ourselves worthy of her patronage by a true and sincere devotion. Such devotion consists not barely in honoring her with our lips, but, St. Bernard says, in honoring her with our hearts, and by our actions, it consists in following her example, and imitating the virtues of her holy life.

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