

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

REV. J. J. DUNN, PHOENIX, ILL.
FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

PRAYER

"Ask and you shall receive." (St. John xvi, 24).

There are only two roads leading to heaven, one is the road of innocence, the other of penance. If we sinned our baptismal robe of innocence by sin, then we must by penance make atonement for the injury offered to God. Every day of our life should be interspersed with little works of penance. When we kneel down to pray, when we have any little disappointment, trouble, trial or affliction, we should offer it to God in a penitential spirit, in atonement for our sins. Prayer is one of the principal works of penance. "My house," says our Lord, speaking of His Church, "is the house of prayer," and, as a natural consequence, every worshipper in this house should be a person of prayer. Man is a dependent being. He comes into life helpless and ignorant of the past and future. He has nothing of his own. The weakness of his infancy, the misfortunes and trials of advancing years and the helplessness of old age teach him this and show him the necessity of calling on a superior power. Hence prayer has always been the natural dictate of the human heart.

We know that man was created in innocence and destined for felicity; but by sin he has lost his innocence and weakened all the powers of his soul. On account of the influence of sin the lower parts of his nature, his bodily senses, are continually urging him on to guilty excesses. Satan and all the powers of hell are bent on his destruction; while the world in league with Satan smiles upon and caresses, in order to delude and destroy him.

Such are the spiritual dangers that continually threaten man, and such the motives which should urge a reasonable person to have recourse to prayer, to seek the protection of heaven.

The thought of a just and angry God should be a sufficient motive to induce the sinner to ask His pardon. But a stronger motive would be the thought of eternal desolation, and the fire that is not extinguished.

Without prayer the sinner cannot return to grace. For it is a truth easy to understand that all the efforts of man are insufficient to obtain supernatural virtue without the co-operation of heaven.

Prayer, then, is absolutely necessary for our salvation. That is absolutely necessary which is a necessary means for a necessary end. But prayer is a necessary means for eternal happiness, our necessary end, and hence is absolutely necessary. Our salvation is a necessary end, because if we do not attain it all is lost, and happiness, the end of our creation, cannot be attained. Prayer is a necessary means to attain this end because God says, "Ask and you shall receive."—Whatever you ask in My name it shall be given you.—Without Me you can do nothing, much less attain salvation.

The saints were all persons of prayer. St. Patrick, it is said, was accustomed to kneel in prayer three hundred times a day. We cannot see how they did so much, since they spent so much of their time in prayer. But they understood that without God they could do nothing, hence their frequent recourse to Him.

A man of prayer is a man of God—a saint. A man who does not pray is a man of the world. He who prays will be saved. The one who does not pray will most certainly be lost; for by prayer, and prayer only, do we obtain the grace necessary for us in resisting the temptations of our spiritual enemies. "And who shall know thy thought, O God, unless thou send wisdom." What is wisdom? It is gold, learning, worldly pleasure? No. It is the power of judging rightly, the power of knowing the importance of things, especially of heavenly things. It is a gift of God by which we endeavor to do His holy will. We cannot obtain this without prayer. We cannot be pure, good and virtuous without prayer. "Pray lest you enter into temptation" is a warning given by our Lord to all and especially to the person of society who daily mixes with the heedless throng and creates the contaminating air of a wicked world.

But some one may say, "my prayers are never answered. I have been praying continually for years, and I make no improvement." Is not this because you do not ask with confidence, because you are indifferent in your prayers? If some one asked you for a favor but was indifferent, did not seem to care whether he received it or not, would you grant it? If a subject went to his king and, while in his presence, was muttering, casting shy glances around and otherwise showing indifference and disrespect to his majesty, the king would undoubtedly order his guard to eject him. But God is more merciful. He forgives us a thousand times for our wilful distractions, indifference and disrespect to Him. He desires our amendment. He wishes us to approach the throne of grace with confidence and love. Jesus assures us that our prayers will be heard if we pray with confidence, humility and perseverance; for He says, "Pray always and faint not; whatsoever you ask the Father in My name, it shall be given you."

Remember, then, that prayer is absolutely necessary for our salvation, since it is a necessary means for a necessary end; happiness, our salvation, being the end of our creation, which cannot be attained without prayer.

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Remember, too, that prayer not only unlocks heaven for us and locks hell against us, but it also unlocks purgatory for our friends and those detained there.

Bearing these things in mind, we cannot but resolve to be more regular and devout in our family prayers and in our morning and evening devotions and our other religious duties.

We cannot fail to ask Almighty God for any grace and blessing we want for ourselves or for any one else; which will certainly be obtained if God sees it is for the best.

And we thus begin upon earth that sweet converse with God which will be our happiness for ever in heaven.

TEMPERANCE

MEDICAL THOUGHT ON ALCOHOL

Men who have died within the easy memory of the most of us remembered the time when the only physician in England known to be a total abstainer was almost an outcast among his professional associates, because of what they regarded his heresy. What a change has taken place is indicated by a volume of addresses recently published in England. The addresses were delivered in the city of Birmingham, by fifty members of the British Medical Association, each physician being free to express any opinion which he might choose. The Journal of Inebriety quotes the following passages as the leading thoughts of the addresses:

That alcohol does not quench but awakens thirst.

That alcohol is of no value when work is to be done.

That alcohol diminishes the quality and total output of manual work of all kinds.

That alcohol blunts perception and feeling, impairs moral sense, and impedes intellectual processes.

That alcohol, when taken by children, checks growth and development, both mentally and bodily.

That alcohol weakens the power of self control, thus leading to immorality and crime, poverty and misery.

That alcohol has a narcotic poisonous action and must be classed with chloroform and ether.

That alcohol predisposes both directly and indirectly to infectious fevers.

That alcohol is now known to be one of the most important factors in rendering patients more susceptible to the attacks of tubercle bacillus and so to tuberculosis.

That in pneumonia and typhoid fever alcohol does more harm than good.

That alcohol hastens the end in a fatal illness, but prolongs the duration of the illness in those cases in which the patient recovers.

That alcohol predisposes to heat-stroke in hot weather.

That alcohol causes rapid loss of heat in cold weather.

That alcohol is one of the great predisposing causes of heart-failure and cerebral hemorrhage.

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That alcohol often causes neuritis or inflammation of the nerves.

That alcohol is one of the great causes of degeneration or too rapid aging of the tissues of the body.

That those who take no alcohol can perform more work, possess greater powers of endurance, have less sickness, and recover more quickly than non-abstainers, whilst they are unaffected by any of those diseases specially caused by alcohol.

That the great amount of drinking of alcoholic liquors among the working classes is one of the greatest evils of the day, destroying more than anything else, the health, happiness, and welfare of those classes.

That the universal abstinence from alcoholic liquors as beverages would contribute greatly to the health, prosperity, morality, and happiness of the human race.

BOYS TAKE THE PLEDGE

During the Vesper service at St. Mary's Church, Cortland, N. Y., on a recent Sunday evening, an edifying and imposing sight was witnessed when thirty-five members of St. Mary's Boys' Sodality took the pledge to abstain from the use of intoxicating drink until the completion of their twenty-fifth year and sixty other boys who had previously taken the temperance pledge renewed the same.

The celebrant of the vespers was Rev. Patrick Donohue, pastor of the church, and the sermon was by the Rev. William Purcell of Syracuse, who spoke on the fourth commandment of God, "Honor thy father and thy mother," addressing his words to "the dear boys of the parish."

The sermon contained many allusions to the dangers of intemperance, and at its close Father Hannon, the assistant pastor, addressed the pastor, saying: "Rev. Father, some of the boys here present already admitted to our Sodality are anxious this evening to declare publicly their intention of observing all the sodality rules and regulations, and moreover they wish to take a pledge to abstain from the use of intoxicating drinks until the completion of their twenty-fifth year."

Father Donohue then had the boys stand up and raise their right hands and take the following pledge: "To avoid evil, both temporal and spiritual, I solemnly promise to abstain from the use of intoxicating drink until the completion of my twenty-fifth year."

A RE-ASSURING NOTICE

The following notice in railway dining cars is causing much satisfaction. It is surely a sign of the times; and the trains will run no less securely for having sober passengers as well as a sober crew.

"Won't Sell Liquor on Trains."

"The New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad has decided, effective March 1st, to discontinue the sale of liquor on its trains throughout its entire territory."

"The New Haven takes this action in the belief that, however custom may have sanctioned the practice, the sale of liquor on its trains in the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut is not permitted by the laws of these States, which make no provision for state licensing. No liquor has been sold in New York State because the distance traversed there was believed to be too short to warrant taking out a state license for each car, such as the laws of that state permit."

"In regard to the sale of liquor on trains, the position of the New Haven in the past has been that it did so in response to the demand of its patrons. However, it is the policy of the company to conduct its business strictly in conformity with the laws of the state in which it operates, and upon an investigation of the subject it feels that as the law in these three states does not provide for liquor selling on trains it should be stopped."

"In taking this action on discontinuing liquor selling the New Haven is following a rule which many other large railroads have adopted in different parts of the country. In Illinois recently twenty-five railroads under a rule adopted by the General Association of Chicago agreed to discontinue the sale of liquor with or without meals in that state, and other railroads have done the same elsewhere."

THOUGHTS FOR MAY

BY REV. D. P. McMENAMIN, RECTOR OF SACRED HEART CHURCH, SAULT STE. MARIE, ONT.

An angel stood upon a sunbeam and announced to Mary, the Heavenly message that God had chosen her to become the mother of His Divine Son. "Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women." At that instant God paused for an answer and heaven became silent. Like sweet music in the silence of a midsummer night was the voice of Mary as she replied: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word." God smiled and all Heaven rejoiced, as the answer of Mary was sung by the angels, who, ever since, have never ceased to sing the praises of Earth's fairest Lily, Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus and Queen of Heaven. The song of the angels was heard on Earth, and the children of God have learned to love the sweet praises of Mary, our Mother in Heaven. "And all generations shall call me blessed," said Mary, the Mother of God.

Like a newly arrived and long looked for friend, the month of May receives from all a most cordial

welcome. Robed in her mantle of freshness, accompanied by myriads of birds from sunny lands, singing to us of pleasures to come, the month of May soon makes us forget the cold piercing blasts of a long and dreary winter. This is the beautiful month our Holy Mother the Church has reserved in a special manner for the veneration of the Mother of God. The first fruits of the Earth she offers to God, but the first smiles of nature she presents to Mary, His blessed Mother. Let us bear in mind, however, while we lovingly place at the feet of our Queen, nature's first and prettiest gifts, that there is still an offering, more beautiful than all the flowers of the earth, richer than all this world's wealth, dearest to God of all creation, an offering He asks for—a gift He craves for, thirsts for and died for—our love, a heart free from sin, a heart devoted to Him.

It is not by crucifying the Son and making His Sacred Heart bleed by our sins that we will please His Mother. But when we strive to avoid sin, when we learn to detest sin, when we lead lives of purity and fidelity to God's commandments, then we are giving pleasure to Mary, the Mother of God, and showing the homage and reverential worship due to her, whom God has honored so much. Let us gather around the shrine then of Mary our Mother, and offer a heart of purity and love for God. Our prayers will ascend as sweet incense to him, and will show herself a Mother and who will show Divine Son, our petitions and the many graces we stand in need of. The flowers we place upon her altars may fade and die and the sweet perfume of their lives exist no longer; but the love we show to Mary will increase God's love for us and the sacrifices we make now will be so much rich treasures before us in Heaven, where flowers never fade and sorrow is unknown. The heart that is placed in the care of Mary will never cease to love God. In moment of temptation, in hour of trial, in time of sorrow, let us hasten to Mary, comfortress of the afflicted. She will be our true friend and most powerful advocate in Heaven.

Help us, oh Mary, sweet Mother of God. Be the guiding star of our lives and teach us to love our Dear Lord more and more every day. Sweet Heart of Mary be my salvation.

Sweet Heart of Jesus remember me.

GOOD WORK OF PRIESTS

The clergy of Vienna have adopted an energetic campaign for the press. They have decided to give every Sunday, in a different church in the city, a sermon explaining the good done by the circulation of Catholic journals, and the opposite evil wrought by the anti-religious press. The first of these sermons was given last Sunday at the conventual church of the Fathers of the Pious Schools, dedicated to St. Thekla. Powerful preachers are chosen who do not hesitate to name the journals which need a rebuff from Catholics, or those which deserve support. Thus, not only the Catholic journals are mentioned, but any honest newspaper which treats Catholics and their affairs with decency and fairness. This makes for an appreciation by the Catholic public of all the journals, besides being a valuable work against the evil of the day, a bad press.—Intermountain Catholic.

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