

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE PROPER USE OF WEALTH

"And I say to you: Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." (Luke xvi. 9.)

It is human to wish to receive some recompense for our acts; it is human also to do many things because some reward will come to us. It is only reasonable, too, that recompense be made to us, but it is not necessarily just that the reward we may expect come to us for our actions. God has told us that good deeds will receive recognition from Him and that they will be rewarded by Him. But this reward is only the one He has planned for us; it is not always the one for which we may wish at the time. Whatever reward God has decreed shall come to us, we must be ready to accept it as it is. It is a manifestation of His goodness, justice, and wisdom. Hence we shall have a purer intention in our works if we always do them without indicating what reward we expect from them, but willingly surrender our wish to God's good will.

This does not mean that we should not order our works to some definite end, but it simply implies that if our wish be not God's desire, we are ready to submit to His will and be content with the reward He will give us, which, coming as it does from Him, must be the right and just one.

There is, however, a reward which we can with certainty expect to come from God, if we perform the acts He demands as a condition for granting it. Humanly speaking, we say we gain this reward, as if it were in our power to gain it. The truth is, however, that this reward is far above the merits of our works considered in themselves. We can merit it, but only with God's grace. He demands of us certain conditions, certain acts—in a word, one kind of life—which, if we labor sincerely to offer to Him, He will purify, strengthen, and elevate by His grace, and thus make us fit for the reward He wishes to give for our faithfulness.

What is this reward? It is eternal life. Are we free to labor for it or not? Morally speaking, we must labor to acquire it. If we do not, we will not simply miss gaining a reward, but we will render ourselves deserving of punishment. But, after all, is this reward forced upon us? It is not. If we take the true view of life, we shall see that it exactly corresponds with the rational demands of our nature. We all desire happiness. But this craving we certainly can not satisfy in this world. There is here no pleasure so unalloyed, so lasting, so intense, as to satisfy our hearts. Hence we should feel grateful in the highest degree possible for the one reward that will satisfy us entirely, even though God has placed conditions for the gaining of it. This happiness was given to man first not as a recompense, but as an altogether free gift. There was one little condition placed for the retaining of it which man failed to fulfil, and God then demanded of him and his posterity that they labor for this reward, and undergo suffering and death before gaining it. This punishment God in His wisdom decreed to be due man because of his unfaithfulness to Him, but God did not decree that man should suffer only; he would merit a future of everlasting joy.

The means for gaining this certain reward are belief in God and service given to Him. In life there are many things that help us in this service, and also many that would seem to constitute an impediment to it. But it is within our power, aided by God's grace, to turn everything in our lives toward the end intended for us. The words of the text, taken from the Gospel of the parable of the unjust steward, indicate to us one of the things that, in a great number of people, constitutes an impediment to eternal life. The Gospel speaks of riches and calls them the "mammon of iniquity." It is not necessary to say that greed for money has drawn many from the service of the Lord, and has kept others from entering His service. The rich have often been repudiated in the Gospels, because they allowed their goods to set them on the road leading to perdition.

But, as with all gifts of nature, the sin is in the abuse, not in the right use. Christ did not, nor would He ever, condemn the rich who make good use of their wealth. St. Luke voices Christ's will in regard to one way in which riches can be used rightly and efficaciously, when he says: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity." In other words, use your riches for the good of the needy, the deserving, the widows, the orphans, all classes of the poor. "When you fail," that is, when the end of your days arrives, if not before, they will help you; they will pray for you; they will bless you before God—and will not all this serve you? How can you doubt it, if God has assured you that even a cup of water given in His name will not go unrewarded? And will not these be witnesses to your charity?

How many orphans you can help—you who have plenty of this world's goods! How many poor and afflicted you can provide for and alleviate in their suffering! How many churches you can build or help to build, where

the holy name of God will be honored and adored and prayers continually offered for you, as benefactor! But we need not think it is only the rich that can gain these blessings. The widow's mite will be counted as much as the rich man's gift of gold, if it be given with the proper spirit.

But let us learn an even more comprehensive lesson from this Gospel—namely, the lesson of turning all things toward God either directly, or indirectly through His especially beloved, the poor, the afflicted, the misguided. If we do it will have a tendency to make us happy also in this world; it also will assure us of that for which our heart ever yearns, a reward for our deeds. How fortunate to have such a means, too, of sweetening the bitterness of life!

ONE OF NATURE'S SERMONS

Have you ever gone into the country during July and taken notice of the plants and flowers in the hedge-rows and among the woods? One need not go very far to see a great deal that will set one thinking, and thinking seriously. It is in the month of July that one becomes aware for the first time of a plentiful sprinkling of red on the foliage of the weeds and plants that grow in such profusion when the summer is at its height. The leaves of the wild strawberry, the stems and foliage of the evening primrose, the seeding dock, the little plants that grow by the wayside; even some species of grass bear stains as though they had been sprinkled with blood, with stains that are a brilliant crimson or a dull red brown. It is the month of July, the month dedicated in an especial manner to the worship of the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord, and it would seem as though all Nature had decked herself in the color that speaks most loudly to the mind of the blood which is the life of man. It is just one of the teachings of Nature that seem as if providentially arranged to harmonize with the devotion of the Church for the time being.

One learns a great deal in watching Nature. The birds are singing their mating when the faithful are on their way to Mass, or very often long before they arise from sleep, teach us to praise the Creator, and the plants of the fields and woods are no less our instructors in these things. It is as though inanimate creation were in some sense a signpost to point out the way to us who are occupied about many things and too frequently forget the end of our creation.

This month, which comes after the great feast of the year are over, after Easter and Pentecost and the high festival of the Blessed Trinity, after Corpus Christi and the Feast of the Sacred Heart, has for its mission the preaching of the Most Precious Blood of Christ, the price of our ransom, the object of our supreme worship and adoration and the object of the adoration of the Blessed in Heaven for all eternity. The crimson stains that are scattered over the fields and along the hedge-rows are not there without a meaning; for God does nothing without a purpose; they are therefore signals and reminders to forgetful men to rally to the standard of the Precious Blood and to join in the psalm of praise that swells up from the heart of our Mother Holy Church at this season.

It is well to take notice of these things for they help us to remember who we are and to what we are tending. We are the children of a great King and ought to glory in His praise and worship just as the birds chant His praises and the very plants of the fields array themselves in His livery. What can we do, what ought we to do to honor the great King Who is Our Father?

There is one way in which we can give Him service that is comparatively easy for numbers of us; that is, we can assist at Holy Mass on weekdays. The Mass is the sacrifice of the Precious Blood and by assisting at it we gain a participation in the effects of its redeeming grace. There is perhaps no other way in which we can more surely obtain the graces that God wishes to bestow upon us than by assisting at Mass devoutly. For some perhaps duty will make the assisting at daily Mass an impossibility, but these are comparatively few. To rise half an hour earlier, to spend a little less time in idle chattering or to retire a little earlier at night, these are frequently the things which keep people from this good habit, and it is too bad when we permit such trifles to come between us and the amazing of spiritual riches.

A story is told of Blessed Thomas Moore, then Lord Chancellor of England, the first man in the nation after the King that his master, King Henry VIII, sent for him one morning early. The Chancellor was just then assisting at Mass. He listened to the messenger, but did not move to follow him, whereupon the man repeated his message. Blessed Thomas turned to him and said: "Tell the King that I am serving his Master and mine and that I will come presently." It was the keynote of his whole life. Great and successful as he was, he preferred the service of God to any other. This trait brought him at last to the scaffold, for his head was struck off on account of his refusal to acknowledge the king as the head of the Church. Looking at the records of his life, one cannot but be struck with the fact of his daily attendance

at Mass, and one asks oneself if his fidelity in hearing Mass were not the seed from which blossomed the courage to face death rather than betray his God.

Many signs point to difficult times for the Church in this country. "The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together, against the Lord, and against His Christ." Surely this is as true in the present time as it was in the day of King David, yet we know the ending of it all. The princes will not prevail in the end and the triumph of Christ is assured; we know it; there is no doubt about the matter at all. But the triumph may not come in our own day. We may possibly even perhaps probably, have to undergo some persecution first. There are not wanting signs of such a time coming nearer and nearer, and then how will we remain faithful? Only if we have prayed and practiced our faith, for otherwise we shall be weak in the moment of danger or suffering. The habit of assisting at daily Mass and of frequent reception of the Blessed Sacrament will be our surest guarantee against failure. It seems as though Pius X. of holy memory foresaw this condition when he invited all the faithful to come to the altar daily that, they might receive the Body and Blood of Christ. It is the best possible way of celebrating this month, for in the Mass we come into actual living contact with the Blood of Redemption, the source of all grace and the inspiration for every virtue. In it we are made strong with the strength of Christ, strong for whatever may befall us to the end of our mortal lives.—The Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.

THE IDEAL OF ST. FRANCIS

The celebration of the seventh centenary of the Third Order of St. Francis has just been commemorated at Ara Coeli in Rome. The date of the celebration itself in Assisi has been fixed for September 15th, 16th, and 17th. In every country of the world this great event has been recalled by the Holy Father's luminous Encyclical and will be observed by appropriate celebration. Great scholars have been engaged to sketch the story of the Saint's life, and to apply the principles of the Great Third Order to the life of the present day.

The story of St. Francis has exerted a curious fascination upon the world. After the lapse of seven centuries, his memory is still preserved undimmed by Catholic and non-Catholic alike. Mankind united in admiration for the priceless example left by the Saint of Poverty, differs sharply, however in the precise object of admiration. Non Catholics write enthusiastically about him. They praise his renunciation of his high estate in life, his wedding to his Lady Poverty, and his familiarity with nature. The picture of the Saint that the Little Flowers of St. Francis has given the world appeals to them as lovers of nature. A man who could talk familiarly with the birds of the air, the wild animals of the forest, and the fishes of the sea naturally exerts a charm upon those of the present day who affect to be disciples of the open road, lovers of nature in their various moods and manifestations, and advocates of the simple life.

But however such men may admire, they do not understand the real object of Catholic admiration of St. Francis of Assisi. The Catholic understands that it was not dramatic climax that prompted him to leave his father's house in quest of holy poverty, but his deep seated humility, which affected every action of his life, which prevented him from ever aspiring to the high dignity of the priesthood, and which caused him to request that he be buried on the hated hill near Assisi where criminals were executed.

His democratic spirit is world wide admired in these days of world wide democracy. But the democracy of St. Francis was founded on something deeper than sentiment, or polity. It was founded on charity, on the love of God, on the Christlike practice of charity, that brought to him the reward of the Stigmata. Those who favor a more equitable distribution of the world's goods are attracted by the social doctrines preached by St. Francis, but the Catholic knows that the reason for his democracy was not the laudable though worldly reason of helping his fellow man to acquire more easily what belongs to him, but the spiritual motive of adopting voluntary poverty because possessions are so many weights that prevent the soul from soaring to God.

The spirit of St. Francis in the thirteenth century was infused into society by the Third Order. The spirit of St. Francis, the Holy Father has said is needed in society in the twentieth century, and to the Third Order he looks to accomplish this spiritual infiltration of the Francis can ideal. Charity, poverty, and humility are three of the sympathetic antipathies of the present day. Men admire them, but are loathe to imitate them. This is perhaps because they look at these virtues with the single eye of the natural man. The Franciscan centenary celebration will impress upon the world a clearer understanding of the spiritual values of these virtues, which may be summed up in the oft-quoted saying of St. Francis: "What a man is in the sight of God, so much he is and no more."—The Pilot.

A DAILY INVITATION

"My house is a house of prayer." In every large city of our country there are numerous Catholic churches. Scarcely any one whose occupation is in the city can go to his work without passing a church. How many visit it when they pass by? How many start from home few minutes earlier than usual in order to visit Our Lord?

"My house is a house of prayer. If when you are passing by you will step in I will speak with you, I will look with pleasure upon your visit. The business and cares of the day will find a safe resting place in Me, so that you will leave My presence strengthened and refreshed." These are the words one might imagine Our Lord addressing to us.

The invitation to visit Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is a personal one. It is a personal matter between your soul and God. Just as a friend invites you to call, so our Saviour invites you to visit Him. His house is always open. If the friend who has invited you to call has prepared for your visit and is waiting for you, you would feel ashamed to disappoint him. So it should be a cause of shame if you disappoint by not visiting Him in the Blessed Sacrament.

He expects you to place your confidence in Him as much and just as truly as you do in your dearest friend. He expects you to tell Him all the cares and sorrows of life. If you converse with Him you will find relief—and that is what a visit to the Blessed Sacrament is—conversation with Our Lord. You talk to Him and He talks to you. You entrust everything to Him. You know He is God. You know He is our Saviour. Therefore, you have perfect and absolute confidence in Him.

Have you not noticed when you visit the church the feeling of peace that comes over you? The church is quiet. Here and there one is occupied with silent prayer. The people passing in and out come and go quietly. Everyone seems to feel he should move with the least noise, that he may not disturb the prayer of his neighbor or the peace and quiet of the House of God. Everything is in keeping. Outside is the noise of cars and vehicles; within all is still. Indeed, Our Lord has well said, "My house is the house of prayer." What comfort you should find in these words! They should remind you that there is a place where you may find peace and rest. They should speak to the tired soul, urging it to visit the House of God, telling it that in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar resides its strength and its repose.

THE SHILLALAH

IN ENGLISH LITERATURE  
Joseph J. Reilly, Ph.D., in Catholic World

The shillalah is no ignoble weapon. It has its place in the international arsenal with the cestus of the Roman, the Toledo blade of the Spaniard, the scimitar of the Arab, the lance of the Bayards, and the quarter-staff of the Robin Hood. It has, like all these, done valiant service in the interest of the public weal and the settlement of personal disagreements. In some respects it is the most convenient of martial engines, for it may be carried with the peaceful intent of an olive branch, and at a moment's notice become the guarantee of one's own safety and the destroyer of any thought of conquest on the part of another. The Roman who swaggered along the Via Sacra with a cestus bound to his fist, the Don in the folds of whose sash glittered the jeweled handle of a dagger, the vagrant bridegroom of Bellona who centered across the countryside, lance on thigh, each cast a soft impeachment into the teeth of his neighbor's good intentions, and had only himself to blame if his tacit challenge lured some chance stroller to fling the gage of battle at his feet. The shillalah has less bellicose associations. It is a device of nature, not man, its purpose varying like her moods, and its congeniality, both as a comrade in peace and as an ally in private war, being the hallmark of her favorite children. Robin Hood, singing a blithe May carol as he sought his trysting place in Sherwood with Maid Marian, his quarter-staff under his arm, scarce stripped of yesterday's blossoms, gave offence to no man. Like Orlando, perhaps, he had carved upon it the name of her whose statue was just as high as his heart and thus dedicated it primarily to love, and only in the face of stern necessity, to battle. So, too, Shaun O'Kelley as he saunters jauntily down the road to Donnybrook, the praises of his colleen on his lips and his shillalah in his hand, incites none to a breach of the peace; for his stout blackthorn, until the need arises, is but a badge of gentility, and like a marshal's baton, proves that upon less ornate occasions its prowess has been tried and not found wanting.

But I would not be understood as robbing the shillalah of its proper celebrity. Truth to tell, its fame is due to its efficiency as the handmaid of war, as well as of peace, of combat no less than of social adornment. It has, indeed, an honorable lineage as arbiter of misunderstandings between gentlemen to whose mutual belief juridical determination offers less allurements in prospect, and less solace in retrospect. Its adjudication is swift, artistic, and final, and it leaves no problems for a supreme council to compromise.

AN EXCELLENT SUBJECT

At its recent meeting in Washington the National Congress of Mothers announced that sixty-five thousand girls disappeared from their homes last year. The Columbia (Ga.) Sentinel, of which the arch anti-Catholic bigot, Senator Tom Watson, is the editor, undertook in a late issue to elucidate the statement. The attempt was characteristically Watsonian. That is, outrageously defamatory.

It was said that the great majority of these missing girls were captured by Catholic priests and sentenced to slavery in Houses of the Good Shepherd. It was stated by implication which amounted to assurance that Bishop Kieley of Savannah was conducting a white slave den in that city for immoral purposes. That the Roman Catholic Church dictates to President Harding just as it dictated to Wilson. And finally insisted that "priests who are not permitted to marry should not be allowed to capture young maidens and use them to satisfy lustful appetites."

Connecting the Congress of Mothers with the outrageous charges has been vehemently repudiated by an official of that organization. The Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia working in co-operation with the National Council of Catholic Men has compiled copies of the paper and other data for presentation to President Harding and members of the United States Senate which completes the case up to the present time.

Possibly some Catholics may say. Why take any note of the matter, since the accusations are so glaringly false as to be unbelievable? But that's precisely the attitude which feeds bigotry. And besides, it is the attitude of error, as there are thousands of brainless anti-Catholic enthusiasts who do not hesitate to accept as true the most outlandish lies regarding the Church, her bishops, her priests, her sisters, her schools and her members.

Aside from this, however, the present case is an aggravated one, and, therefore, merits special attention. The publication uttering the defamation has as its editor a mem-

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ter of the United States Senate. The defamatory matter involves the President of the country, incites on serious grounds federal officials as well as it impugns the people of Georgia, their laws, their courts and their institutions as Bishop Kieley mentions. And in addition to all of this, it is clearly contrary to a federal criminal statute.

Therefore, the proper step has been taken. And the only mistake that can be made will be a failure to carry the case to some kind of a definite conclusion. Ignoring the bigots and their outrageous assaults on truth and decency has gotten us nowhere, although it has advanced and strengthened their purpose and position. Our silence has been their best ammunition, and they have used it with effect against us.

Depending on the intelligence and fairness of others has counted neither for protection nor advantage. In future, therefore, our policy must be different. And why shouldn't it be? We have come to a different day. The day of a united leadership in

the hierarchy. The day of a united loyalty to that leadership in the laity. The day, therefore, when defamatory declarations, religious intolerance and outrageous assaults on our rights is soon to end if we but avail ourselves of the opportunity. Let us illustrate that determination by making an example of the Columbia Sentinel. It's an excellent subject for the inauguration of the new policy.—Church Progress.

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