

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

EASTER SUNDAY

THE JOY OF Penance

I wish all of you, my brethren, the joy of this day. It is the day of our Lord's victory over death and hell. Many of you have received Him in Holy Communion either this morning or during the preceding week. To such He has found a way to communicate something of the vast ocean of love and joy which inundates His own soul. A good Communion, following a humble confession of sin, is indeed the nearest way to that tomb, riven and empty, and streaming with the light of heavenly joy, about which the Church gathers her children this morning. How well chosen is Easter-time for the annual Communion of all good Christians. "I have seen the tomb of Christ, who has risen from the dead," may we well say with Mary Magdalen. God grant that not one of you all may pass your Trinity Sunday without attending to what is so appropriately called the Easter duty.

It seems to me that this feast is a great day for sinners—meaning, of course, repentant sinners. For look at the facts? Who is the saint of the Resurrection by excellence? Certainly dear Mary Magdalen, the type of all the penitent. She stood beneath the Cross when Jesus died, comforting Him and His Mother in that dreadful hour of His death and of that Mother's woe. And when the dead corpse was lowered down, Mary Magdalen pressed His limbs and feet and hands to her bosom while our sorrowful Mother clasped His heart to her own and kissed His pallid face a thousand times. Mary Magdalen helped to lay Him in His grave. She watched then; when driven away by the soldiers she bought spices and came again to embalm Him. And whose words are those repeated to-day all round the world as the dawn greets the watching glances of the faithful? "They have taken away my Lord! I know not where they have laid Him!" and again the amazed and ecstatic exclamation when he saw Him in the garden: "Rabboni! Master." What a great store of love, says St. Gregory the Great, was in that woman's heart, who, when even His disciples were gone away, could not tear herself from the grave of the Lord!

See, then, my brethren, the reward of the love which is in true sorrow for sin; it is given a singular kind of pre-eminence; it is selected above that of innocence and placed on guard at the post of honor to receive the first public greeting from the Immortal King of Glory, triumphant over sin for ever. I say public greeting, for doubtless Jesus visited and greeted His Mother in private first of all; but this is not written down for our edification, and Mary Magdalen's privilege is. Sinners need encouragement, and certainly they get it to-day in the honor paid to their glorious patron, the woman who had many sins forgiven her because she loved much.

I say again that sinners need encouragement. In truth, there is no shame so deadly as that which conscious guilt brings to the human soul. There is no degradation like vice—in fact, there is none other but vice. Hence many sinners are met with who do not turn to God and who hold back from confession and Communion because they are ashamed and afraid. It is not so much love of sin as want of confidence that now hinders them. They have felt the force of passion as the slave feels the whip of the slave-driver; or they have repented before and fallen again, and this fills them with distrust in themselves; or their surroundings are a constant source of temptation; or the very process of reconciliation to God, the very practice of the simplest acts of religion, have grown strange to them. These, and other reasons, varying from mere timidity to utter despair, show the need of a strong word of encouragement to sinners. This is the day for giving sinners courage to repent. Oh! let every man and woman partake of Christ's courage to-day. All who are sinners, let them loathe and detest their sins, and let them feel that if our Lord is with them they can conquer any passion, resist any temptation, and persevere to the end. It is a singular thing that not only the first recorded words of our Lord after His resurrection were addressed to His favorite child, the great penitent woman of the Gospel, but that the first interview He had with His disciples was begun by the institution of the Sacrament of Penance, the open door of that city of refuge—Our Lord's Sacred Heart. Now is the time, therefore, most appropriate for the return to God of all sinners among us. May our risen Saviour give you that joy if you have it not, and if you have it, may He confirm it to you for ever! Amen.

THE ANNUNCIATION

On the 25th of March the church celebrates the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin. Holy Gabriel, the angel of the Incarnation deserves a special honor from all the creatures of God, and especially from us who have by the Incarnation become children of God and heirs of eternal salvation. The feast of this glorious prince of the Seraphim occurs March 18, as a preparation for the Annunciation.

After the Our Father, the Hail Mary is the most beautiful prayer. It is the beginning or rather the public announcement of the glories of Our Blessed Mother. Therefore,

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Lacordaire says: "Whenever a human mouth repeats the Hail Mary, then through Mary an unspeakable happiness flows in the remembrance of a moment which has no equal, either in heaven or on earth."

Blessed Thomas a Kempis was a devout servant of Mary, and used to salute her with a Hail Mary whenever he passed her image. He greeted her with an Ave Maria when he entered or left his room, and by this means obtained great grace for his soul. But through the company of some of his schoolmates, who were careless of their religion, he gave way to tepidity. At this time he saw in a dream Mary bestowing favors upon several of his friends.

As he was waiting for his turn, she said to him: "What are you waiting for? You no longer greet me? What has become of your devotion to me? Begone!" Thomas awoke, and he resumed saying the Hail Mary with more earnestness than ever.

TEMPERANCE

THE EVIL OF DRUNKENNESS

The end of the drunkard is in many cases an unhappy death. Death often overtakes him suddenly. There is no other vice that so frequently brings on an unexpected death as the evil of drunkenness. Some are frozen to death whilst they are intoxicated, others fall into the water and drown, others are killed in a brawl or by accident. If you examine the statistics of accidental deaths you will find that a very great number of those that were killed were drunkards. Such a death is a terrible misfortune; it makes one shudder to think of being called away from this life in the state of sin, unprepared, incapable even, of making an act of contrition or of raising one's thoughts to God. Such people die impenitent. If they do not die whilst intoxicated, their death still has many terrors for them. It may be that when laid upon their dying bed and the devil stares them in the face they make an act of contrition and strike their breast in sorrow; yet their life will haunt them; they see that they have given their years to the service of the devil instead of the service of God, and they are not without fear.

The end of many drunkards is eternal damnation. "Drunkards . . . shall not possess the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi. 10). There is nothing more to be said. The Apostle declares solemnly that the kingdom of God is not for the slaves of their depraved appetites. Our own reason would teach us the same even if the Apostle had not spoken so clearly. The life of a drunkard is a life of sin—can we then suppose that the gates of heaven stand open continually to invite such a one to enter? You can not suppose this for a moment; your own good sense must tell you the contrary. For such a one there can be nothing but eternal ruin.

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We have looked into the beginning, the progress, and the ultimate goal of the drunkard's career. God grant that you received a true horror of the vice of intemperance; and that each one of you will take heed lest your heart be overcharged with drunkenness. Take the advice of the Apostle: "Be not drunk with wine" (Ephes. v. 18). If you are concerned about your temporal and eternal welfare you will be on your guard against excess in drink and will entirely avoid strong drinks, such as whisky. There is nothing wrong morally in taking drink in moderation, but if you find in yourselves a craving for strong drink, be on your guard, for you are in great danger, and total abstinence may be the only salvation for you. The less frequently you are seen in drinking places the better it will be for your good name, your health, and your eternal salvation. Do not follow the example of some young men who spend their last penny in drink, sit in the saloon half the night indulging in evil conversation, gambling, and drunkenness. Do not let your companions induce you to drink when you do not care for more; never treat or be treated. This latter rule would save the majority of those that in time become drunkards. If you want a drink, pay for it yourself. Be on your guard against associating with young men that are given to over-indulgence; evil companions corrupt good morals. —Rev. Joseph Schuen, in S. H. Review.

A GERMAN PRIEST AND HIS WORK

One of the greatest temperance workers in Germany has passed away in the person of Father Anno, a Dominican monk, who died a few weeks ago at Dusseldorf his native place. Born in 1856, Joseph Neumann was ordained priest in 1882. After several years' work as private chaplain, he became attached to the hospital for female workers at Aachen and later went to Rellinghausen bei Essen. In this position he was appalled by the ravages made by drink upon the population and became an ardent advocate of abstinence. He founded the League of the Cross for men and women and later the Priests' Total Abstinence League, that the clergy might lead the way in self-denial. He then published a monthly review, the Volksfreund, and began to build homes for various classes of drink victims, where they have every assistance to recuperate and discard their awful scourge. Amongst the best known and most flourishing of these are the Camille Home at Heldhausen, the Anna home for women at Mundt, and another establishment at Wessenberg on the Dutch frontier.

While he was superintending all these various works, Pastor Neumann

was also writing and preaching the cause of temperance and organizing pilgrimages to Lourdes which gave great comfort and edification.

It was not till 1909, only three years ago, that the zealous secular priest felt a call to the cloistered life and joined the sons of St. Dominic in Vento. He continued to carry on his great work until he caught a severe chill on one of his preaching expeditions, and died from lung trouble in Dusseldorf to which a hospital is attached.

Since this work was started by Father Anno the organizations have multiplied, and another branch of the work, the Catholic Sobriety League, has come into existence. This is the Catholic Temperance League. This Society was formed in distinction to total abstinence. It has excellent youthful branches doing a service to the physique of the nation, for the children who are enrolled therein promise, the younger ones, not to touch spirits in any form till they are fourteen, and the elder, not to drink spirits till they have passed their eighteenth year. The principal league for adults directs its energies to publishing truths about alcohol and its evil effects, fighting unreasonable drink habits, protecting children from the evil, establishing rest and cure homes, and doing all to promote family life and sobriety in all pleasures. Since 1905 the league has had remarkable success, and its monthly organ published at the low price of one penny, has a sale of 90,000 copies.—Catholic Union and Times.

THE SINS OF THE PARENTS

Though most of us have heard the Biblical announcement that the sins of the parent are visited on the children, even to the third and fourth generation, how many parents stop to think what that statement means and how literally it is carried out, thus placing parents under great responsibility, in regard to their children.

The other day the same judge in one of our Superior Courts, within a few hours sentenced a father to the insane asylum and his son to the penitentiary for life as a murderer. The boy was nineteen years of age. The father confessed that he had been a drunkard since he was ten years of age. It is surprising that his son should be a murderer, while yet little more than a child?

Do the men and women who are drunkards, or who lead dissipated lives realize that they are not only ruining their own lives, but those of their children as well? We see on all sides of us the evidence that the statement of the Holy Scriptures is true, not only in physical matters, but in social and material directions.

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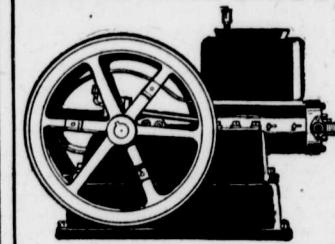
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The child of dissipated parents can not get the home influence it needs to bring out the best of all that is in it. It can not get the education it should have? It very likely lacks the proper food and nourishment to properly develop its physical organization—in a word, it is handicapped by having a drunkard or a rake for a father or mother. . . .

It is a tremendous responsibility that the parent takes, at best; but think of the awful position of the fathers or mothers who have ruined their own offspring by their dissipation when they stand before the judgment seat of God.—Catholic Herald.

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