FIVE MINUTE SERMON

Rev. J. J. Burke, Peoria, Ill.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

ST. JOSEPH

"And Jesus Himself was beginning about the age of thirty years, being, as it was supposed, the son of Joseph." (St. Luke iii, 23.)

The saints are the friends of God. They are those men, women and children, who, having lived a life according to God's law, and that of His Church, having overcome the trials, difficulties and temptations of this world, are now enjoying the victor's crown in the next. It is a mistake to suppose that the saints were far different from us. They were not. They were descendants of Adam as we are. They had the same corrupt nature, the same passions to conquer. But they fought bravely against them, conquered and are now in heaven. They belonged to every avocation in life. The farmer from his plow, his wife from the kitchen, as well as the priest from office, the sister from her convent and the monk from his monastery, the student from his desk and the instructor from the class-room go to form the great army of God's saints.

To-day, the feast of the patronage of St. Joseph, let us meditate a few moments on his life learn therefrom useful lessons.

St. Joseph, as is well-known, was the foster father of Jesus, that is, he took the place of a father in his regard.

He was likewise the husband of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Although Mary was the Mother of Jesus, we know that God, not Joseph, was His Father; for "He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary."

It is not proper, my dear friends, for us to dispute about the virtue of the saints and contend that one is greater than another. Still, we can plainly see that God seemed to be more liberal with His graces and favors to some than to others. For example, we all know that of all the saints the Blessed Virgin occupies the highest place in heaven next to God. And it is but proper that He should honor His Mother more than His friends. But next to the Blessed Virgin I think it can be safely said that St. Joseph occupies the highest place among the saints of God. I infer this from the teaching of God and of His Church.

When God was looking, if I may so speak, for a person who would properly care for His divine Son while sojourning here upon earth, He certainly must have chosen amongst all His saints the greatest, the holiest. He passed by Adam, Isaac, Moses and the other saints and patriarchs of the Old Law. These had sighed for a sight of the Saviour. It was denied them. Joseph was singled out by Almighty God as that one of all His servants most fitted to not only see, but to nurse, to feed and to live with the Messiah as a father with a son for thirty years. What an inestimable privilege! to be a member of the Holy Family! Kings would have given mountains of gold, Solomon, in all his glory, surrounded with all that gold could purchase, with thousands of servants to obey him would have given all he possessed for but a glimpse of the Man-God.

Yet Joseph, the poor carpenter, was chosen to take care of Mary and Jesus.

In honor of each of the other saints the Church has set apart but one day in the year; while in honor of St. Joseph the Church has set aside three days, thus clearly teaching that of all the saints, next to the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph is the greatest and deserving of the highest honors. This is but reasonable. For since God selected him from amongst all the descendants of Adam and so honored him as to place in his custody His only Son with the Virgin Mother, we are but following God in honoring him above all the saints.

We honor him by leading a good life—a life conformed to the will of God as was his life.

St. Joseph's life is a model for each of us. We are all men and women of labor. St. Joseph was a poor carpenter. Is not this a consolation for us? When we are toiling at our various avocations, weighed down with the heat and burden of the day, tired and footsore, our limbs aching and our minds distressed, then let us remember that the Holy Family lived in a poor cottage at Nazareth and that, while Mary did the housework, Joseph toiled at the carpenter's bench, Jesus assisting him.

The thought of this should inspire us with a holy desire to do work where He has placed us and thus imitate the great St. Joseph, who is our special guardian, protector and patron.

The Bible sums up all it has to say about St. Joseph in three words "Ipse erat justus—He was a just man." And yet how much is comprised in this brief sentence? He was just. What is meant by this? It means that he possessed all virtues. He was conformed to the laws of God. He gave everyone his due. He was upright, innocent, pure, honest, honorable, blameless. He loved God above all things and his neighbor as himself. He did unto others as he would have others do unto him. He was patient under trials, persevering under difficulties and constant in the performance of good deeds. He did what God willed and did not murmur when trials came.

He was a just man means all this and more. Of how few can it be said "He was a just man!" Let us endeavor to live so that when our time comes to die it can be said of us as it was of St. Joseph "He was a just man." He gave everyone his due. He was obedient to the laws of God and His Church. He was honest in his dealings with his neighbors. He cheated no one. He was kind to his family, upright in all his dealings with his fellowmen and just in sight of God.

For the blessings we enjoy we should thank God morning, noon and night. We should unceasingly praise and thank Him for having directed our steps to this delightful land where untrammeled we can do His work; we should thank Him for having given us this beautiful country, fertile soil and good opportunities to raise for Him souls that will hereafter people heaven. I fear we do not appreciate the unspeakable benefits we enjoy. We sometimes long for life in a large city. There is a glitter; a glare about the great city that dazzles the eyes of a young person from smaller places or from the country. But in this as in other things "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view." It has been said that God made the country, man made the town. There is a certain amount of truth in it. And in this as in all other works of God you can see its superiority to that of man.

The person in the country is in constant communication with nature. These works and beauties of nature cannot but elevate the mind from nature up to nature's God.

The beauty of a cloudless sky of azure blue or one constantly changing by the shifting of clouds; the lovely tints of the rainbow or of the sunset in a bank of clouds, with its fiery red and fringe of gold; the purity of the country air; the loveliness of a rural scene in which you behold young animals of various kinds and sizes skipping over pastures of green; the crops of hays, oats, wheat and corn growing to maturity; all these things are well calculated not only to attract the eye of a lover of the beauties of nature but to cause him to think constantly of God Who giveth the increase to our flocks and the seeds we sow.

There is nothing more useful, nothing more beautiful to look upon then growing crops and green pastures teeming with glossy-coated animals.

The farmer whose animals and crops grow while he sleeps, who is becoming independent while resting, who on rising in the morning sees his corn four or five inches taller, his animals many pounds heavier than the night before; who breathes the pure air of an independent life, views the surrounding beauties of nature and appreciates them, cannot but be deeply impressed with the certainty of God's presence and providence.

Hence the country or a small town is the most suitable place in which to live and rear a family. Hence it is, too, that it is from the retirement of the country that heaven receives the greatest part of its recruits. Here we can live a life in imitation of St. Joseph at Nazareth.

And while endeavoring to imitate his life of retirement, of labor, of purity, of honesty, of justice, of all virtues, let us ask his assistance, his intercession.

Be assured he is a powerful advocate before God. When we remember that Jesus was subject to St. Joseph for about thirty years; when we recall to mind the fact that during these many years at Nazareth He obeyed promptly Joseph and Mary; when we consider that at the least word or sign of Joseph, Jesus quickly did what he wanted; when we consider, I say, these facts, then, we will learn not only as children promptly to obey our parents in imitation of Jesus, but also we will, in particular, learn that Joseph is above all the other saints in dignity and power to assist us.

St. Teresa says "Our Lord would teach us that, as He was pleased to be subject to Joseph upon earth, so He is now pleased to grant whatever this saint asks for in heaven."

While asking him to obtain from God the grace of living a good life, let us not forget to ask for the grace of a happy death. If our death is not a good one, all is lost and heaven, our being's end, cannot be obtained. St. Joseph is the special patron of a happy death. He delivered the child Jesus from His enemies and has the particular privilege of delivering the dying from the snares of the devil.

His death was a most happy one. in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Pray that yours may be like it.

In all your trials, wants, troubles, difficulties and temptations "Ite ad Joseph," "Go to Joseph; pray to Joseph."

If you wish a special virtue "Go to Joseph." The lily in his left hand is a symbol of holy purity. He is the special guardian of the virtue of purity. If you desire that great virtue go to Joseph.

The ax in his right hand represents that he was a carpenter, a laborer. If you are tired of your hard lot of a laborer, go to Joseph; learn of Joseph to be patient and industrious.

Pray to him at all times and for all graces, but especially for a happy death. Ask that your death may be like his, that in the presence of the Holy Family you may breathe forth your soul, repeating the sweet words, Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

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TEMPERANCE

THE HABITUAL DRINKER

We commend this warning from the editorial columns of the New York Sun to the man who drinks moderately but habitually. It may cause him to open his eyes to a danger he did not sufficiently realize. Disease is the sure portion of the man who drinks regularly, even though moderately. The "moderate" habit may sooth his conscience and save his respectability, but it will ruin his stomach and hasten his death. It says:

"It is the habitual indulgence in alcohol which is prone to lead to certain well-known degenerations, especially when it is imbibed before meals. It is important, therefore, not only to differentiate between its moderate and habitual use. The human organism is capable of resisting the effects of deleterious agents occasionally introduced; but it becomes incompetent to eliminate them when the intake is habitual and constant. The average man who 'takes an eye-opener' every morning is almost certain to have a 'nutmeg liver' that will eventually take him to his grave with dropsy etc.! the man who does not enjoy his dinner without the preceding cocktail is menacing equally his only future comfort and his wife. It is only a question of time with the average individual and a question of idiosyncrasy with others. A recent statement made by a physician of half a century's experience confirms this view, although he is himself a very moderate drinker."

DOES NOT EXIST

Let us waste no words in the possible or ideal saloon. It will be time enough to discuss it when it will be discovered. The saloon as it exists to-day trades in and battens upon intemperance, and at its door must be laid all the dire evils which accompany or follow from intemperance. Over saloonkeeping hangs a heavy cloud of social and religious disgrace. The Church frowns upon it in anger and sorrow. Mr. London regrets that drink is so accessible and believes that it is dangerous to the society for the saloon to be the legal, convenient meeting place that it is. "I regret," he says, "that John Barleycorn flourished everywhere in the society in which I was born, else I should not have made his acquaintance, and I was long trained in his acquaintance."

EMPTY TALK

The present Lord Chief Justice of England made the statement that there was no bar, by reason of race or religion, to the position a man might attain in that country, not even the Lord Chancellorship. The London Tablet takes exception to the statement, saying:

Here indeed is a Daniel come to judgment. He tells us in flat contradiction of the Statute Book, that there is no bar by reason of religion to the position to which a man may attain in this country, "not even the Lord Chancellorship." Has he so soon forgotten what was known at the time as "the Russell and Ripon Relief Bill"—the bill which was designed to make Catholics as eligible as other men for the positions of Lord Chancellor of England and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland? Has he forgotten already that the passing of the Bill was defeated by an outburst of Protestant intolerance in the House of Commons? The way to the Woolsack in this Christian country is open to the Jew, but by the wisdom of Parliament it is closed to a Catholic. The successful Chief Justice has forgotten all this—but may we not fairly ask him to be mindful now of his own principles and to translate his eloquent lip service to them into definite action? The bad law he overlooked is still on the Statute Book—surely we may ask him to make good his words and to use his influence with the Government to make the talk of tolerance a reality.

THE CONTRAST

From time to time some filthy sheet exasperates us with a filthier article and we wonder how discerning people view us. Occasionally we get a glimpse.

Our attention has just been drawn to a poem, "The Ancient Church of Rome," which we have read with much pleasure. Unless otherwise advised, one might judge that some pious priest or good sister was the author: but, not so. No less a personage than Rev. Charles Edward Stowe, a Congregational minister and son of Harriet Beecher Stowe of the immortal "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Here is the poem:

As rises Teneriffe above
The restless ocean's moan,
So looms above earth's chance and change
The ancient Church at Rome.

Majestic 'gainst the sunset sky
The Titan mountain stands,
Frowning while ocean giants die
Upon the foaming sands.

So bold against the lurid past,
Yet stands the Church of Rome;
Unchanged when all is changing fast,
The storm tossed pilgrim's home.

O'erwhelmed by the barbarian hosts,
The Eternal City fell;
But laid on her rude conquerors
The magic of her spell.

Thus facing countless future years,
And ages yet unborn,
Rome rises o'er all haunting fears,
And dreads no coming storm.

Commenting on this poem, an eastern exchange says:

"And what would we care for the low-flung slanders, the degraded thoughts, the hate-inspired falsehoods against our Church, when we have Americans of the type of this man? We know there is no institution in the history of man comparable to our Catholic Church, which has outridden every manner of storm, moral and intellectual, during twenty centuries. We know, too, that her everlasting triumph is certain in the ages to come, because the God who founded her has promised this, as well as that she should, like Him, be reviled."—The K. of C. Columbian.

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CHURCH THAT MAKES CONVERTS AMONG HEATHENS

HAS UNIFORMITY OF DOCTRINE AND UNIFORMITY IN TEACHING ARTICLES OF FAITH

Mr. Hilliard Attridge comments on the strange opinions of the Westminster Gazette in the matter of the Kikuyu incident, and the intercommunion of Anglican and Evangelican Protestants. The Gazette is of the opinion that the uniformity of doctrine and practice which may be desirable at home cannot be insisted upon abroad, where heathen and Mohammedans abound. Mr. Attridge says:

"You say that a great Church propagating Christianity in the wilds of the world cannot be thus definite in its standards of belief and practice. But here hard facts are against your theory. For it is precisely the Church that insists on the most precise standards of belief that recruits the largest number of new adherents in the wilds of the world. In China the Roman Catholic missionaries have now 1,750,000 converts, including at one end of the scale men of the lettered class, at the other the aboriginal tribesmen of the Yunnan hill country, and the nomads of the Mongolian Steppe. If we take the official returns of the Anglican missions, and add to them those of a score of other Protestant bodies, we have a total for the heralds of a vaguer gospel, and this amounts in all to 324,000 adherents, of whom only 167,000 are claimed as baptized Christians (see 'China Year Book'). The grand total is less than that of the Catholic of the single province of Chi li. It would appear, then, that what appeals to men is the message of those who hold that there is a real revelation, conveying a definite knowledge of objective truths, not the theory of a Church, or a group of Churches, which are content to attach no precise meaning to their formularies, and which permit the gospel of white, black, and grey to be preached side by side, by ministers who agree to differ. Behold the Kikuyu problem is this deeper question: Is the message of the Gospel a definite one, or is it something so vague that it does not greatly matter what those who receive it believe and practice?"—The Missionary.

It is a good thing to believe, it is a good thing to admire. By continually looking upward, our minds will themselves grow upward; and as a man, by indulging in habits of scorn and contempt for others, is sure to descend to the level of what he despises, so the opposite habits of admiration and enthusiastic reverence for excellence impart to ourselves a portion of the qualities we admire.—Matthew Arnold.

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Mr. Blanford knew he needed help and took Samaria to help him loosen the clutches of the whiskey fiend. It cured him and he has the courage to tell the whole world about it and send the thanks of his wife and four children for the happy home restored to them all.

Mr. Blanford says in part: "I have not taken a drink now for over four months—I have no desire—passing a saloon the odor almost makes me sick. My nerves are much better, my appetite is good, in fact my whole system is in good condition. Samaria has made a great change in me as well as making a happy home, so let me and my wife and four children thank you, and hope Samaria will help many others—you may use all or any part of my correspondence as testimonials. Roy Blanford, 706 East 10th Street, Michigan City, Indiana.

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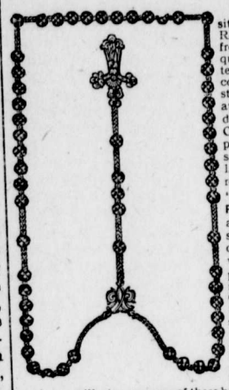

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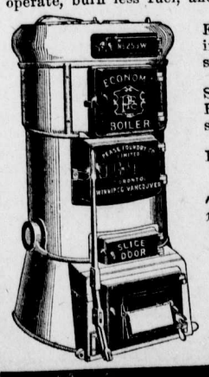

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