

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOU, O. D.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE POWER OF FAITH

"At that time, entering into a boat, Jesus passed over the water and came into His own city. And behold they brought to Him one sick of the palsy lying in a bed. And Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy: 'Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.' (Matt. ix, 1-2.)"

Faith seems limitless in its power. Throughout the whole Gospel we have excellent examples of the wonderful benefits faith brings to man. It causes his Maker from His throne to look down upon him with a sympathetic eye, while allowing him, poor earthly creature, to raise his heart to love his God, to lift his eye to see Him, and to elevate his mind to come to the knowledge of Him.

When faith abides in a man, as it did in the instance related in the text, it is almost impossible to enumerate the blessings that it may bring to him. And, after all, to a person well disposed, faith is easy of acceptance. It does not require study, nor labor, nor any great sacrifice. It is true that many outside the fold look upon faith as a sacrificing of reason. This is not so. Rather is it the enabling of the highest faculties of man, for when a man believes on faith he believes on the authority of God. When he believes history, he accepts it on the authority of the historian, who is but human and fallible. When he submits to the laws of science, he places himself, as a rule, under the laws of the material world. So it is with whatever we believe in this world, on the authority of anyone other than God. It must all be human, no matter how learned the man from whom it proceeds, and we need make no apology for faith. Those who do not possess it need more than an apology to those who do, who they frequently ridicule. Such a curse as the total absence of faith is more deplorable than the misfortune of ignorance, for unbelief is more debasing than lack of knowledge. The humblest person can have a faith that will carry him to the most sublime truths of heaven, but he can not always nor does he very often have even a knowledge of the highest truths of earth. On the other hand, many a one with a great and comprehensive knowledge of the things of earth has no faith. Who will doubt that the position of the former is the better? Human knowledge will count as nothing toward the final perfection of man, unless it is joined with faith; whereas faith, without even a pretense of human knowledge, will make one see God as He is.

Faith fills the mind with the blessedness of heaven, and it forms temples of righteousness and peace in this world. It makes the human eye look beyond the fleeting things around it; it causes the heart to love more than the things with which it comes in immediate contact, and it enables the mind to rise to a sublimity far above its natural powers. Faith is the sweetened oil, gentle and refreshing, that flows over the wants of suffering humanity. It is a balm to the arrow-pierced heart, and it is the tie that links man to man and man to God in the bonds of purest love. Well has it been said in the Gospel that if one possesses faith he can move mountains. It may not be that we can move these mountains in a material way, but the figure serves to show us how strong faith is. By faith we can fathom the reason and the reality of their existence. Though huge, grand and majestic, we rise from them to One who is seated high above them. As we gaze upon them in all their beauty and magnificence, we realize, too, that they must pass, that their solidity will not always be stable, and that some day they will crumble like all other material things. It would be impossible for man to begin to enumerate the blessings that faith brings to us during our pilgrimage on earth. He alone who possesses faith can speak of it; he who is without faith knows nothing of it.

The reason why people do not understand the catastrophes that occur in the world, the unpleasantness of life, the uncertainty of the future, and the hard sufferings of daily existence, is because they lack faith. Without faith it is impossible to understand life, to know whence we came and whither we are going. It may be said it is a good argument to prove the necessity of faith, from the fact that we do not know our religion without it, and, as a consequence, could not know our end did we not possess faith. But God has been more generous in the blessings that He has given us, because of our faith. He has not intended faith simply for our knowledge, for the elevation of our minds to things existing in another sphere, but he also has intended it to help us even in a material way in the sphere in which we live. Outside of him who has felt these benefits, no one knows this better than he who deals with people who have faith. The only real consolation of the minister of God in his work for the Lord is the fact that he sees solid faith in those among whom he labors. He knows that every throb of their hearts is different from that of those deprived of faith. He knows that the words that fall from their lips are more truthful than the words of those who have not faith. He knows that the submission with

which they accept the ill of life is more sincere than that of those who know not God by faith. He feels that he can rise with confidence and speak to them of God, of religion, and of other things that relate to God. He will be given a willing ear, he will please their hearts and will enlighten their minds. He will make bright the path which they are following through life and offer to them guidance on their journey to the shore of Eternity.

Blessed above all on earth is he who has faith, but he must pray in the words of the Gospel that he believe yet more, and above all things he must lead a life that will be consistent with his faith. Instances are numerous in which people possessed of this greatest of blessings have in time lost it. Not only has this happened to individuals, but entire nations have fallen away. A review of the history of the world will convince us how lamentable are the consequences to those who have lost the faith with which God blessed them. From the first time that man sinned, God punished him for his lack of faith; and all the plagues and scourges that have come from the hand of God have been sent upon man not only because of his sins, but also because he had either lost faith or had neglected to live up to its practices. And people should remember that faith comes from God, hence every one may receive it; but, as with all other gifts of God, a person must be under the influence of divine grace to receive faith and live up to it, and to have any assurance of persevering in it. It is true that faith and sin are co-existent in a man, but such faith is dead. We refer to a heavenly faith—a faith that makes a person live, hope, and love; a faith that makes him overcome all the difficulties of life, traveling unwaveringly the path set for him, and finally reaching a safety that is eternal. A faith, in other words, by which we live, with which we live, and in which we live; a faith that brings us to the most sublime truths of heaven, but he can not always nor does he very often have even a knowledge of the highest truths of earth. On the other hand, many a one with a great and comprehensive knowledge of the things of earth has no faith. Who will doubt that the position of the former is the better? Human knowledge will count as nothing toward the final perfection of man, unless it is joined with faith; whereas faith, without even a pretense of human knowledge, will make one see God as He is.

GENERAL INTENTION FOR SEPTEMBER

RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS XI.

RELIGION IN THE SCHOOLS

In this our day there is the question of education clamoring insistently for serious attention and consideration. In the pulpit, on the platform, in the press, views and systems and theories are daily discussed, elaborated, criticized, approved or condemned, according to the end which each speaker or writer, basing his views on his particular concept of man's duty and destiny, judges to be the ultimate aim of education. Hence, it is not surprising as a result of the multiplicity and variety of modern educational ideas, to find Catholics whose views on this all-important question are somewhat hazy, often erroneous, or at least shaded with the godless, material and utilitarian theories that guide most of the State education of today. Catholics who, while they would valiantly defend against all comers the great search-light truths of their holy Faith, seem to have imbibed a bit of the poison of modern paganism and to have become somewhat careless of the fundamental principles of Christianity ought to have in the education of their children.

If the world today is passing through a moral crisis, if the people of the earth are face to face with the blighting advance of neo-paganism, with that avidity for material enjoyment which did for Greece and for Rome and for every nation that has made a god of pleasure; if in many countries today the very question of national existence is in the balance, because the children in the homes are few or none, because divorce is making a mockery of family life, the bulwark of all civil society; if the reason is not hard to find, banish Christ from the school and from the home, take away religious instruction and moral discipline out of education, relegate to oblivion the very name of God, without Whom all authority becomes a mere hollow word, and you have in the making a generation ripe for all the racialities that human passion in its rawest state can foster. It is a law of the moral world. You reap what you sow. If as Leibnitz said, good education is the first foundation of human happiness, it follows that bad education is the surest means of bringing wretchedness upon people and nations.

Education in its broad sense means the harmonious development of the whole man. It is the perfecting and directing of man's faculties in accord with his dignity and destiny, and includes all those exercises, and experiences by which the memory, the imagination, the intellect, and the will are brought to maturity, by which knowledge is acquired, judgment sharpened and balanced, character formed and strengthened. The child is born with latent capacities which must be wisely developed and trained in order to fit him for the duties and activities of life, to equip him for the fulfillment of his obligations

towards himself, his neighbor, and his God.

Now the philosophy cherished by any single educator or by any body of educators, that is to say, the meaning, purpose and value of life as understood by the teacher of youth, will put its stamp upon his work, and determine in its most important issue—moral rectitude—the worth of the finished product he sends out into the world. That philosophy, then, which is to be the foundation of true education must furnish right answers to the questions of man's origin, dignity and destiny. It must hold that man is made up of a body and an immortal soul, that upon the proper use of this present life depends the eternal welfare of that soul, that the worldly success which is rung in on the cash-register has no weight in the balance of eternity, that it profits a man nothing if he gains the whole world and suffer the loss of his immortal soul. This is the only true philosophy of life. It is in strict accord with the revealed truths of Christianity. It tells us that man is created by God, that the end and purpose of his existence is to praise, reverence and serve God in this life, and by so doing to merit a blessed eternity. It tells us, moreover, that all the other creatures of the world have been created for man to help him in the attainment of this end and must be used by him only in that measure and in that manner in which they are conducive to the fulfillment of the aim God had in view in creating man.

The application of this fundamental principle to education shows us immediately where stress ought to be laid in the training of the young. Education means the development of man's faculties, especially his intellect and will. By the intellect we acquire knowledge, we distinguish what is right from what is wrong. This is of great importance, yet it will not of itself carry us very far towards the goal of our existence. What is of far higher import is the will, by which the man of character embraces and follows what is pointed out to him by his intellect as right, shuns and abhors what his intellect shows him to be wrong. Thus it is easy to see that where many systems of education go wrong in laying all stress on the intellectual to the neglect of the moral or will training, the truly Christian system considers mere instruction or intellectual training secondary and subordinate to the training of the will, the formation of manly, Christian character. The education that sharpens the intellect and stores the mind with knowledge without training the will, strengthening the character and planting in the heart a love for duty and the law of God, only helps to turn out dangerous members of society. Lack of character in a man whose intellect is highly trained makes an unsafe, if not harmful, citizen. An honest, upright, good-living man, be he so deficient in intellectual attainments as not to be able to sign his name, is far more worthy of esteem in the eyes of men and of love in the eyes of God than two thousand learned rogues devoid of character and conscience. We must have education if we are to make our way in the world; but any idea of education that does not take in the moral and religious formation of character as its prime object is necessarily incomplete, one-sided and dangerous.

In general we may say that character is the expression of the personality of a human being, and that it reveals itself in his conduct. In the narrower sense in which we use the word when we speak of "persons of character," it implies an habitual disposition, a uniform manner of thinking and acting in strict and sturdy conformity with the moral law, the main lines of which are clearly written by nature in the heart of man. Character in this sense, and consequently true education, embraces above all else two things: firmness of intellect, so as to have always before one's eyes the end and purpose of life as the rule and measure of all one's actions; and firmness of will, so as to subordinate everything to that end and purpose as an absolute duty to be fulfilled at all costs, to be preferred inflexibly to all gain and pleasure and honor, even to life itself. A man of unstable and weak intellect cannot naturally be a man of strong character. But the double firmness of intellect and of will can lead man to that spirit of self-sacrifice and self-denial which is the perfection of character, and which in the supernatural order with the grace of God produces the heroism of sanctity. Character in this sense is the result of the perfect development of our natural and of our supernatural life, the product of that education which is at one and the same time intellectual, moral, and religious—the only true education.

Is it any wonder then that the Catholic Church insists ever on her great educational aim; a Catholic school for every Catholic child and every Catholic child in a Catholic school? For the Church needs character in its men and women. So does the world. It needs them with the freedom of purity in their minds, the fresh blood of high purpose in their hearts, the courage of truth and faith in their souls. It needs men and women who dare to think and to speak their noble thoughts in every walk of life, who in all their actions are true to themselves, to their fellow-creatures, to

God. If the world is to be made a better world, the moral and religious formation of character in the individual is the only specific that will work the change. It is not possible to dump the world into a moral smelting-furnace and purge away its wickedness. Mankind cannot be raised en masse to a higher level of goodness on a moral elevator. If the individual is good, the family will be good; if the family is good the State will be good. To bring out by sound education what is best in the individual is the only social uplift deserving the name.

In her attitude towards education the Catholic Church firmly adheres to the teaching and command of her Divine Founder, Jesus Christ, Who commissioned her to go forth and teach all nations. Teaching them what? "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii.) Christ's complaint was: "Just Father, the world hath not known Thee," and after telling us not to be "solicitous saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the heathens seek—for your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." He adds: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi.).

The Catholic Church demands for her children a system of education which is solid and complete, and no system can be such, if it ignores man's first and most important duty and fails to plant and foster religion in the hearts of the young. Religion is not mere pious sentiment and feeling. It is the sincere acceptance of God's revealed truth and the loyal subjection of the will to that truth. The word of God must be taught and believed as the foundation of all true religion, for "This is eternal life; that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii.). St. Paul, whose great heart was ever fired with zeal for the highest welfare of the earth's Christians, was consumed with one desire: "That their hearts may be comforted, being instructed in charity, and unto all riches of fullness of understanding, unto the knowledge of the mystery of God the Father and of Jesus Christ, in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (I Cor. ii.). If Christ is the foundation and centre of Christian life, He must be made the foundation and centre of Christian education. There can be no true education without moral training and there is no moral training that will stand the tests and trials of life if it is not based on religion. This is the lesson of history, of daily experience.

It is then a strict duty for Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools. Moreover, if the religious training which the children receive is to bear fruit there is still another side of the question to be considered. If the Church insists that every Catholic child be in a Catholic school, she insists even more strongly that every Catholic child be surrounded by the influence of a good Catholic home. The Catholic school with its solid moral and religious training is important, indispensable, but its work should not be handicapped, it must be sustained and supplemented by home influence. Some parents make the great mistake of thinking that once their child has enrolled in a Catholic school, they have done all their duty. They imagine that their responsibility for the education of their children ends there, little realizing how much the efforts of teachers to form their pupils to the love and practice of their religion depend for success upon the whole-hearted cooperation of parents.

The child is in school five hours a day, while there he is instructed, directed and controlled. He is taught the law of God and made to understand that his life must be governed by the Divine Will made manifest to him by legitimate authority. But if during the many hours he is out of school he is left almost entirely to the devices of his own sweet will, the effects of his school training are bound to suffer. Unless the parents supplement the teacher's work by supervising the occupations and amusements of the child, knowing the companions he associates with, the books he reads, the pictures he sees, unless they furnish the child with the example of practical Christianity in their own lives even the best school and the best teacher will fail to achieve their aim. Ask the teachers, who to serve Christ have sacrificed their lives to the classroom, what they consider the greatest obstacle to their work. They will answer: the lack of Catholic influence in home-life. At school, with gentle insistence on the love of God, the child is told that he must be faithful to morning and evening prayers, that he must go to Mass on Sundays and holy-days of obligation, that he must be kind and patient, generous and charitable. At home, a child is frequently forced to observe that father and mother rarely, if ever, say their own prayers, that they miss Mass for almost any reason, that they are unkind, quarrelsome, impatient, uncharitable. The child will not reason, but will imitate; or if he does reason it will be to conclude that, if his parents don't bother their heads much over religion, there is no reason why he

should. What he hears and practices in school will by degrees fail to appeal. The home influence will carry the day.

It is the design of God that next to His own dwelling, the Church, the home should be the holiest place on earth. In the home the father's example has a deep and lasting effect on the children, for he is the head; from him comes that "Yes" or "No" that settles all doubts, and often that "Yes" or "No" is not spoken, but imposed by mere example. But if by Divine Providence the father has been made the head of the mother? May we not say that she is the heart of the family from which her every child draws its love for all that is beautiful, for all that is ennobling, for all that is sacred? To every child the true mother is the most beautiful, the most perfect creature on earth. She is an unfailing fountain of wisdom and of sympathy. The lessons she imparts to the tender ears of childhood are the lessons of life which echo down the years and still ring vibrant in the burdened heart of old age. If the man or the woman has yet to be born who ever forgot that heaven-sent guide of childhood years, let Catholic mothers stop to think what a responsibility, what a sacred trust, is theirs. Jesus Christ is not going to ask any mother how well she shows in society or how prominent she was among her neighbors for her looks, her gowns, her conversation, her entertainments; but He will ask each one: What hast thou done with the immortal souls of the children I gave thee? If the home is the corner-stone of society, the mother is the corner-stone of the home. We can get along without women politicians, women architects, women lawyers, women doctors; but we do need women who love God with all their hearts, who serve Him as they are called to do by giving themselves without reserve to a flock of little ones growing up in wisdom and in holiness in the sanctuary of the Catholic home.

If, then, parents have the moral and religious upbringing of their children at heart, they must second the efforts of our Catholic schools by home training and home example. They must realize their grave responsibility before God for the training of their children, and having realized it, live up to it. Only then can they expect Catholic education to bear its full fruits; only then can they be sincere in praying: Thy Kingdom come! On them, as on the Catholic school, Christ counts for the coming of His Kingdom. His reign in the hearts of all men. It is not enough for Catholic parents to provide Catholic schools for their children; they must co-operate with those schools in turning out witnesses to the cause of Christ.

J. I. BERGIN, S. J.

FILIPINO STUDENTS REBUKE ADVOCATE OF BIRTH CONTROL

Manila, Sept. 4.—Students at the University of the Philippines have administered a prompt rebuke to an advocate of birth control in the faculty of the University. Prof. Henry S. Townsend, of the Sociology Department, raised the issue in a lecture wherein he urged birth control as a means of avoiding over-population and the attendant poverty. Father Ferdinand Haberstroh, S. J., chaplain of one of the University dormitories immediately opposed the professor. Then a large group of the students passed a resolution condemning birth control and pledging themselves to have nothing to do with it. Raising of the question has provoked much discussion of birth control among the more educated classes, advocates finding stout opposition everywhere.



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St. Anthony's Corner

Have you noticed the different States from which faithful clients of the Wonder-Worker have sent their grateful acknowledgments to his famous Graymoor Shrine for favors received? We regret owing to lack of space, our inability to publish more of these letters which wonderfully attest the many and varied favors St. Anthony is obtaining for those who have recourse to him. Here are a few of them:

Mrs. H. R. Dallas, Texas: "Enclosed find check for subscription to The Lamp. I receive same monthly and enjoy it very much. The remainder of the sum is for St. Anthony's poor. It put me to shame to read all the acknowledgments of St. Anthony's favors while I have received so many wonderful favors through his intercession."

Mrs. M. F. C. Seattle, Wash.: "Enclosed find an offering and many thanks, as I wrote you some time ago to include me in the Novenas for the sale of a little house. I had had it in three different agencies but could not sell, and it was vacant nearly a year. It would soon have to go for taxes, but I thank God, St. Anthony and you Fathers, in the course of the Novena it was sold."

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