

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

LOW SUNDAY

FAITH AND SKEPTICISM

"If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. For this is the testimony of God, which is greater, because He has testified of His Son. He that believeth in the Son of God hath the testimony of God in himself." (1 John v. 9, 10.)

God made man in such a way that he depends to a great extent, upon others for his knowledge. He cannot acquire it intuitively; but, by patient labor and listening, it is engrained in him. This in itself would be sufficient proof of how far below Himself has the Maker placed man, the noblest of His earthly creatures.

God is omniscience. No creature can possess this attribute; consequently, even though an individual be capable of acquiring a knowledge of many things, there still remains an infinite amount of which he can know nothing, while dwelling in the flesh.

As regards temporal things, man shows but little skepticism when told of the things of which he hitherto knew little or nothing; but, with many, it is a different question when an attempt is made to impart to them a knowledge of the things of God. It is true that faith is necessary for a proper and sufficient knowledge of God here below, and this faith is infused by God in those who possess this greatest of earthly blessings. Many place their own minds against that of their Creator, and refuse to believe anything they cannot understand, or which human knowledge—either their own or that of others—can not teach them.

They may become learned, to a great extent, in the sciences of earth, and manifest signs of great education. But they are not lifted thereby above the things of this world; and, as long as they remain in this state—no matter how meritorious their lives may be from a natural standpoint—they can not acquire one whit of merit before God.

Belief in God is necessary before all else; and even those who profess no belief in Him during life, unconsciously reap, even and anon, the fruits of His beneficent existence and presence even in the world. It is pride—the cause of the fall of both angels and men—that keeps them aloof from their Master. A natural outcome of pride is a feeling of self-sufficiency, and very often Satan aids one to feel, at least, that he can and does exist without the help of God. It is one of his clever ways of deceiving man, and of causing him to walk on an apparently elevated plane, but from which, in the end, he will step to an abyss of misery. Every mortal is a creature of God, belongs to Him, and, sooner or later, must abandon helplessly into the hands of God that which now appears as sufficiency.

This belief in God also is easy—considering the great blessings God has bestowed upon us, not only by creating us and enabling us to share in His happiness, but also by redeeming us from our bondage by the sufferings and death of His own beloved Son. Herein is contained the greatest exhibition of truth and sincerity that man ever could witness. Ages come, ages go, but man remains ever the same. With the aid and help of the knowledge of past generations, and that of the present great age with its discoveries and inventions adding immeasurably to the conveniences of life, he is not brought one step higher in a spiritual sense, if he refuses belief in God, and neglects the duties he owes to Him. In fact, all these things, wrongly interpreted by many, have been the means of continuously detaching great numbers from God. In the narrowness of their comprehension and the pride of their lives, they have believed, and still believe, that happiness will consist in perfecting these benefits to man, and this to come about with God eliminated from the process.

It is true that since the coming of the Son of God, more believe than did before His advent. Yet, through the wicked schemes and designs and pride of various heresiarchs, the faith in Him has been blighted, and its bright glow, in the case of many, still refuses to shine forth. The unshaken faith of the early Christians has not come down through the centuries to all in its purity. The various influences antagonistic to it have not been without results, and now it is difficult to find the simple faith of the ancient true lovers of Christ. Of course, this is said mainly of people outside of the pale of the Catholic Church, but, even within her most sanctified walls, there are many who stand aloof, pass judgment on her doctrines and practices, and offer her a very unwilling obedience.

But the testimony of centuries stands by her and with her. The impress of God's goodness and help is evident upon her, and her great sanctifying influence attested to by the lives of millions of her children. Yet, in the face of it all, there is but too often to be found a weakling bearing the name of "Catholic." It is sad to think that such should be the condition of some within the Church, yet it is not surprising, for, if the good Master Himself had to bear insults and ingratitude, can the Church, His spouse, expect to be free of sorrow?

Will man ever try to master the lesson that he needs God—whether he pretends to realize it or not? His very existence is due to God; His present and his future are in

God's hands. His knowledge—no matter how comprehensive—is but a slight spark of God's infinite knowledge; and if he expects happiness beyond this life, it can be only in a share of the very happiness of God.

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GREAT MIRACLE OF EUCHARIST

CITY IN WHICH CONGRESS WILL CONVENE IS SINGULARLY BLESSED

(In view of the interest created by the coming International Eucharistic Congress in Amsterdam, the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament have prepared the following article on the special Miracle of the Eucharist with which the name of the city of Amsterdam has been associated for several centuries.)

(N. C. W. C. News Service)

Since the eyes of the whole Catholic world will be centered on Amsterdam in the coming month of July, when the 27th International Eucharistic Congress will be held there, it may be interesting to know the facts concerning the Eucharistic Miracle that took place in that city almost six centuries ago.

In 1345, on the Tuesday before Palm Sunday, that is to say, on March 15th, a pious inhabitant of Amsterdam, being very sick and having expressed his desire for Holy Viaticum, piously received the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the hands of a parish priest. Soon after, however, he was greatly distressed and the persons who were attending him cast into the open fireplace what he had vomited, without thinking of the Blessed Sacrament which he had not had the time to digest.

Very early the next morning, a servant who was watching by the sick man's bedside approached the open fireplace to poke the fire. To her amazement, she saw a brilliant Host, complete and entire, in the midst of the flaming hearth. She was frightened naturally, but nevertheless she was brave enough to withdraw the Host from the fire without burning herself! As soon as she touched the Sacred Species she felt her hand become cold. Then she took the Host with her other hand and the Host changed color miraculously and became brown as though it had been burnt by the fire.

Very much upset, the servant hastened to the lady of the house and said to her: "I have the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ in my hand." Immediately she handed her the precious Host. The lady drew from the cupboard a linen cloth of fine baptiste and wrapped the Host in it and deposited it in this way in a clothes-bin. The sick man himself wanted to see the Miraculous Host. He took it in his hands to examine it, at the same moment it slipped through his fingers.

TAKEN IN PROCESSION TO CHURCH

We are not told why these good people acted thus, but it seems the woman began to tell all her neighbors in the street what had happened. The news spread like wild-fire and reached the ears of a priest very quickly. He came in haste to the house where the miracle had taken place. He took the Sacred Host, put it into a ciborium and transported it to a nearby church. Three days later, the lady of the house to her great surprise found the Host in the trunk again. She ran to tell the clergy of this event and they saw in this a sign of Providence desiring that greater honor should be paid to the Miraculous Host. Consequently all the clergy of Amsterdam came solemnly to his house to take the Blessed Sacrament and transport it in procession to the parish church.

In the meantime, the sick man had become well, and he grumbled at his wife for not having held her tongue and for having aroused the population of the whole city. Two days before the Sacred Host was transported in procession to the parish church, the man, in a fit of temper, was bitterly abusing his wife, when his young child who was on his knees near the open fireplace suddenly fell into the fire. He had barely time to pull him out and the unfortunate child had frequent epileptic fits thereafter until the day when his father had come back to his senses, atoned for his sin by going with his whole family, barefoot, to the church to adore the Miraculous Host.

This event was carefully examined and submitted to the Bishop of Utrecht, who declared that God should be looked upon as the Author of the miraculous events which had happened at Amsterdam.

Veneration for the Miraculous Host spread rapidly, not only in Amsterdam, but throughout Holland, especially because many

miraculous cures took place and many favors were granted. A chapel was built on the spot where the miracle had taken place. It was destroyed by fire in 1421 and a second chapel built in its place.

On May 25, 1452 a fire broke out in one of the houses of Amsterdam and spread so rapidly from house to house that in a short time the whole city was an immense conflagration. The Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament of the Miracle was soon reached. The faithful did all they could to save the chapel from destruction. They tried to open the doors and to save the precious Host at least, but to no avail.

They were beginning to deplore their loss, when God performed another miracle. As soon as the fire was put out, they hastened into the midst of the smoking ruins and found the vase which contained the Host intact! The fire had not even left the slightest trace on the linen veil that covered the ciborium! This miraculous preservation was soon known throughout Holland and other countries. Devotion to the August Sacrament increased and a new chapel was soon built to take the place of the other destroyed by fire.

MANY FAVORS GRANTED

Many miraculous favors were granted in this chapel. The Emperor Maximilian, Archduke of Austria, and Count of Holland, was taken very sick in 1479. Human means could not cure him. He promised that if he were cured he would go to Amsterdam and venerate the Miraculous Host. He was restored to health and accomplished his promise in 1484.

The cult of this particular miracle of the Blessed Sacrament of Amsterdam reached its height in the sixteenth century. In 1504, the Bishop of Utrecht ordered that a feast be celebrated every year on the 15th of March with a solemn octave, during which the Blessed Sacrament of the Miracle would be carried in procession through the city. Fifty years later, his successor on the Episcopal See of Utrecht confirmed the feast and the solemn Octave.

The apotheosis of worship of the Miraculous Host took place when the Emperor Charles V. came as a pilgrim to venerate this Miraculous Host. Soon after, the Reformation set in and the Protestants did all they could to destroy devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. They went so far as to attack the church where the Sacred Host was kept; tore the paintings to pieces; broke the stained-glass windows and profaned the altars. This was in August 1566.

For the first time since 1345 the procession of the Miraculous Host did not take place in March, 1567. The church was closed to the faithful in 1568; transformed into an orphanage, the following years rented out for various purposes until 1616. Then the Protestants took possession and have remained there ever since. The Miraculous Host exists no longer. It is thought that the Bishop of Utrecht consumed it during the troubled times of the Reformation.

Nowadays, every year Amsterdam witnesses the clandestine procession, which takes place at night around the church—the *oude Kerk* as it is popularly called—where the Miraculous Host was formerly kept and which is now in the hands of Protestants.

WOMEN UNITE IN PRAYER

This procession takes place during the solemn octave in the month of March. Only men may take part in this nocturnal procession, while the women remain in prayer at home. As many as 50,000 men at a time march in silence along the streets whereon the solemn procession formerly took place. When the procession is over, they separate into various churches of the city where all hear Mass and receive Communion.

This solemn procession, this magnificent manifestation of the sublime and majestic, every year by a whole population, full of faith and love for the Divine Eucharist, is very impressive. It is easy to understand then why the torch of Catholic truth could never be extinguished in a country where the faith of the inhabitants knows no human respect no matter what sacrifice it may demand of them.

There is no doubt but that the coming International Eucharistic Congress which will be held from July 22nd to the 27th this year at Amsterdam will bring out once more the sturdy and loyal faith of these Catholics of the Low Countries. Americans who can go to this Congress will witness one of the most remarkable demonstrations in honor of the Blessed Sacrament that the world has ever known.

JUBILEE OF RETURN TO ROMAN LITURGY

Paris, France.—A solemn ceremony in the church of Saint Roch, organized by the *Amicale Art Liturgique*, marked the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Roman Liturgy in the diocese of Paris. It was on the first Sunday of Lent, 1874, that an order issued by Cardinal Guibert, then Archbishop of Paris brought about the replacement of the diocesan liturgy by the Roman liturgy.

The proper diocesan rite had been established in Paris in the eighteenth century as in other French dioceses, when under the influence of Gallicanism the music of hymns, the text of certain prayers of the

Mass and certain prayers of the breviary were altered.

But during the last century Dom Gueranger, approved by Pius IX. conducted an ardent campaign for the reestablishment of the Roman liturgy. He gained the support of several bishops but his greatest help was received from the Catholic writer Louis Veuillot, whose remarkable articles made a deep impression on public opinion. Nevertheless, Paris held back, and several of its archbishops refused to depart from the tradition. In 1874, however, Mgr. Guibert, who had accepted the reasons presented by Dom Gueranger, having received the unanimous approval of the Metropolitan Chapter, substituted the Roman liturgy for the Paris liturgy. No change has been made since that time.

WORLD'S GREATEST MORAL INFLUENCE

Prescribing remedies for an ailing world has always been the favorite pastime of reformers. Today the world is suffering from grievous ailments, but it is also suffering from too much advice. Every so-called thinker and writer on social and moral subjects feels the urge to tell the world just what is the matter with it, and how it can be cured. The result is that so much gratuitous advice like too many cooks defeats the end it is intended to accomplish.

When we hear the evils of the world diagnosed and their cure proposed by well intentioned but nevertheless irresponsible speakers and writers, it is well for us as good Catholics to remember that the Holy Father has given deep study to the evils of the world, diagnosed its malady and proposed the supreme remedy. In his Encyclical, *Ubi Arcano Dei*, Pope Plus XI. has given us the best treatment of world problems and their solution.

His Holiness has pointed out in that luminous document, that the causes of the world's present plight are certain fatal errors which the world has embraced and clung to with fatal pertinacity. Among these errors is an exaggerated nationalism that exalts one's own nation above others and claims for it rights which it denies to others. This form of collective egotism has its counterpart in class warfare among various social classes that is fomented by envy and hatred.

False notions of the family have brought about loose doctrines of morality, and undermined the foundations of society. But the basic error of our age is the deification of the individual and the glorification of natural impulses. According to

the resolutions adopted recently by the Central Verein, paraphrasing the Holy Father's encyclical, "this false conception of human life leads men to reject moral restraint of every kind and to bid open defiance to the laws of God. In the wake of this lamentable revolt against the moral order, we see lawlessness, disregard of established authority, irreverence, self-seeking, greed, an uncontrollable thirst for pleasure, aversion to work, immodesty of every form, and a veritable craze for amusements of a dangerous type."

This is a strong indictment of modern civilization, but it is true. The Holy Father has given this as his diagnosis of the malady from which the world is suffering, but he adds a further enlightening remark. He tells us that manifold as these errors are they grow from one common root "the spirit of irreligion." Our age has lost its spiritual vision and has become indifferent to the supernatural.

Finding the basic cause of the world's malady will suggest the remedy. That remedy is nothing else than the contrite renunciation of these errors and the immediate conversion to Christian life and Christian teaching. There is no work at the present time more necessary or more salutary than the restoration of the Christian religion, the reestablishment of Christian principles, and the return to Christian ideals of social life, of family life, of public life and of business life.

This is why the Holy Father has chosen for the motto of his pontificate the phrase that suggests this remedy to every mind, The Peace of Christ in the Reign of Christ. Recognizing the benefits that will come to the world from the Peace of Christ in the Reign of Christ, the Holy Father is working night and day to impress the Christian conception of human life upon mankind.

We on our part can co-operate with him in this noble endeavor by familiarizing ourselves with his utterances, by studying his writings, by following his counsels, and by making the Christian ideal of life operative in our homes, in our schools, in our work, and in our daily lives. Then let reformers rave and visionaries dream about the better world that is to come.

We, following the Vicar of Christ and his suggestions and commands, will feel that we are doing more than they to bring about world peace and concord by helping in our own humble way, by word and action, to lift the world from the worship of Mammon and place it where it belongs at the feet of Christ.—The Pilot.

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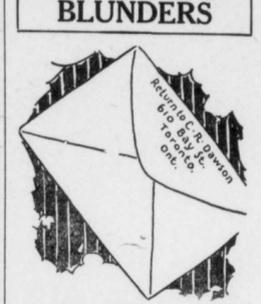
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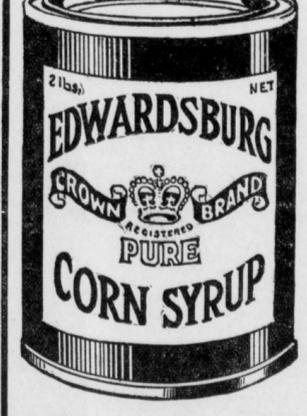
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