

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

REV. F. P. HICKER, O. S. B. SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

RESPONSIBILITY

"Walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called."—Ephes. iv. 1. To be Catholics, my dear brethren, will not suffice for our salvation. We must be good Catholics.

will not save us, but the walking worthy of it; not the calling, but the obeying. To fulfill our responsibility towards God, we must use His graces well.

MINISTERS PROTEST AGAINST OUTBURST

After the opposition to conscription on the part of Ireland, enemies of the Catholic Church in England raised the no-popery cry. But it was short lived. There is no doubt but that the end of the affair was hastened through the splendid protest of certain Anglican clergymen and members of their congregations.

"Sir—Without wishing to express here any opinion on the attitude of the Irish hierarchy towards conscription, regarded as a purely political act for which they must accept the full responsibility, the undersigned priests and laymen of the Church of England desire to repudiate in the strongest terms certain statements recently made in the press and pulpits of this country in connection with this attitude, and indignantly resent the attempt to excite odium against the Roman Catholic Church and its head on the score of the Irish Bishop's decision.

"While repelling with horror the suggestions that have been made in the press as to the advisability of withdrawing toleration from the Roman Catholic Church in England, we desire particularly to dissociate ourselves from the allegations made in St. Paul's Cathedral on Sunday, April 27, by the Rev. R. J. Campbell. It is not true that the Catholic Church ever appears, as the preacher said, to be working against the Allies all over the world; the English, French, and Belgian Bishops have distinguished themselves by their patriotic devotion. It is not true that the Church had not one word to say in denunciation of the rape of Belgium; this crime was explicitly condemned by the Cardinal Secretary of State. It is not true that the Vatican has never hampered Germany; it protested against the air raids on Italian cities, and there is no evidence against the Church that her operations have always told against the Allies—whatever particular groups of Catholics may have done or left undone.

"We shall, therefore, be grateful if you will give publicity to this protest against an unauthorized campaign which is dishonorable to the country in general and to the Church of England in particular.

COMMON SENSE

Many well-known talkers and writers have hysterically told us that this war proves the failure of Christianity. Their idea seems to be that Christ came among men, not to establish His Church for the salvation of souls, but to start a sort of glorified League Conference which would end all war.

Of course, if one starts out with such a theory, the wars of any century will prove the failure of Christianity. The main trouble with these war-mongers is that they are not Christians at all and fail to understand what Christianity is. Their religion is progressive materialism and anything that helps this they extol; everything else they minimize and condemn.

Again many people who get into print are asking in agonized accents why God permits such terrible evils as this war and its accompaniments, the burden of complaint being that God is to blame for the war.

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tion may be worked out by the establishment of two standards, a church standard on the one hand and a civil standard on the other. It would then be possible for the church to deny remarriage of divorced persons, although the state might permit them to enter into a civil contract.

"But as things are, the state law must, of necessity, be the more lax. Under present conditions there would be a tendency toward the spread of immorality if the state undertook to insist on maintaining the standards of the church intact. We must appreciate these facts if we are to progress.

"I believe the greatest hope of attaining the end in view is found in the creation of a sane and lofty public sentiment. We must begin by a process of education rather than by immediate legal compulsion. But it is certain that we shall continue the agitation for better laws and strive our utmost to safeguard the home and sanctity of the marriage vow in Providence."

A FRENCH INCIDENT

"It matters not" cried the old Abbe, crossing himself before the gaping hole in the front of the parish church at Verneuil, France. "God is eternal and by His grace we shall survive."

The six-inch shell that went through the hole had carried the door with it and blown out part of the side wall. A smaller hole in the clock tower marked where a three-inch projectile had cut through, and the dial lay shattered at Abbe Schmidt's feet. Another shot had torn from its hangings the old church bell which in its fall had crashed through the front and obstructed the entry. Another shot had made a great opening in the roof and the shell exploding inside had demolished the altar, and the reliquary lay buried beneath a heap of stone, mortar and splinters. But the four walls remained erect and the steeple seemed to hold its pointed head up with the same dignified fortitude with which the venerable Abbe braved the iron hand of the destroyer.

Five days before the Germans had made a short forced halt around Verneuil, and when they passed through it was to seek shelter for a great number of victims of the French artillery which had halted in its retreat to check the pursuers. The vicar of the parish was among the 20,000 priests with the French army, whose lines already extended far to the south. Most of the inhabitants of the parish had fled or sought refuge, and the Abbe Schmidt was nearly alone to aid the German surgeons and nurses, to take care of these grievously torn soldiers, most of whom lay upon bundles of straw in the church itself. For three days, night and day, he cared for the enemy's wounded with the same devotion as if they were of his own country. Then, in the frantic hurry of the retreat before the allies, he endeavored, as far as possible, to ease the pain caused by their transport into all sorts of improvised ambulances.

DIVORCE FOR THE ASKING

Thinking people are beginning to see the menace of divorce. Even Protestants who believe in divorce as one of their great privileges, admit that there ought to be some way of lessening the great number of divorces.

It is hard to see how they are going to draw the line. Once you admit that marriage can be dissolved it is difficult to convince one man that he has not as much right to the privilege as his neighbor. The only Protestant argument given against divorce is this: Divorce is a good thing, and the Catholic Church has no right to refuse it, but the only trouble is that too many are asking for the privilege. But if it is right in one case it is right in a hundred. As long as it is granted that one man has the right to divorce his wife it will be useless work to exhort the others to forego what they deem their Reformation privilege.

Still some of the Protestant ministers admit that they are scandalized by the multitude of divorces. One of them, a representative minister of Providence, declares that there is a feeling that all is not well with the family life, and that action on the matter will soon be forthcoming. "The standard upheld by the Episcopal Church," he says, "is the one which we must aim to approach." It is news to us that the Episcopal Church has a standard much different from that of the other Protestant churches. When the Episcopalian wants a divorce his religion does not stand in the way.

But the Baptist minister, quoted, has a way of his own to settle the matter. He says: "We must face the problem, however, with a breadth of view and with charity. We must understand its limitations. We must distinguish wisely between the law of church and state. "It is a question, and a grave question, too, how far the state ought to go in forcing people to live up to the standard set by the church. Possibly the answer to this ques-

The last of the wounded had scarcely quit the town, when the booming of cannon was heard from two directions almost simultaneously and from the German lines the shells began to fall into the little village. When the French came through, the church was wrecked and no longer a possible shelter for the French wounded.

The following day was Sunday, and in the morning Abbe Schmidt, with the aid of a few parishioners, succeeded in hanging the bell from a beam saved from the church; dug out the reliquary from under the debris, erected an altar in the street and said Mass before the largest congregation that had gathered in his parish in many years.

This is only one of many incidents showing that, after drifting for a century toward unbelief, France is revived at a considerable degree its religious devotion under the soul-harrowing influences of war.—Intermountain Catholic.

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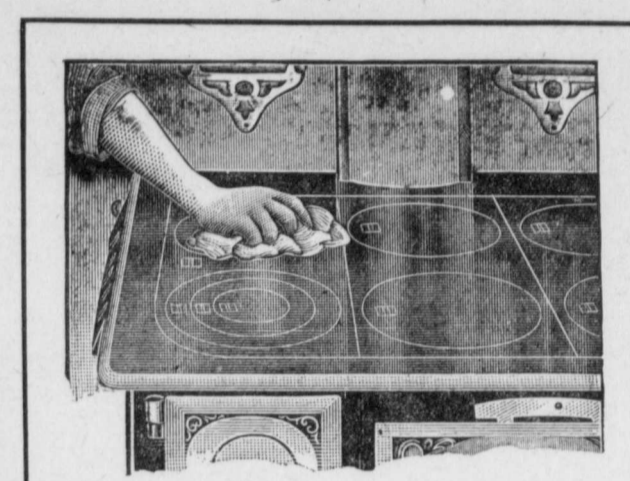
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