

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY THE REV. F. P. HICKEY, O. S. B.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

THE SHAME THAT LEADS TO SORROW
"Ye, rather, blessed are they who bear the word of God and keep it." (Luke xi, 28.)

We cannot help but be amazed when we hear these words of our Blessed Lord. Can anyone be more blessed than His own Immaculate Mother? No, but her greater blessedness was not simply in being His Mother, but being His worthy Mother. "Ye, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

This leads us to think, what a noble calling is ours to hear the word of God and keep it. What blessedness should be ours if we had done so; but if we have not done so, what shame and confusion. Where is the blessedness in our careless, negligent, and sinful lives?

Let us look into our souls, and shame will force us to be humble and obtain forgiveness. Hear the word of God! How many a time has the hearing of the word of God been distasteful to us, and we have shirked the opportunity of listening to it. A short, early Mass to avoid a sermon; no prayer-book with us to whisper a word of God, rather distractions rioting in our minds, our thoughts engrossed with all manner of memories and desires, but with no remembrance of any word of God. Spiritual reading!

That is left for nuns and priestesses. Newspapers, novels, ah! yes; our minds are enticed by something else than the word of God. Even if time hangs heavy on our hands, there is no desire to listen to that. That word which should steady our minds, give us pause to think whether all this foolish dissipation of mind will lead us. That word that should nerve us to resolve to do better and give ourselves to obeying God. That word which should give us courage, based on the promises of God, to do our best. With what shame do we find our souls overwhelmed by our sinful neglect in hearing the word of God.

But looking back, perhaps there was a time when we heard the word of God and loved to hear it. Words that lived in our souls when we were young, and which conscience will not let die, and makes them re-echo in times of temptation and sinfulness. Certain it is that we have all heard more than we have kept. That, indeed, is the important, the all-important part. To have heard and not to have kept!

"O Lord, Thou knowest my reproach and confusion, and my shame." (Ps. lxxix, 10.)

It is when we examine why we have not kept the word of God that we realize our shame. Why did we not? Because we loved and preferred to be careless and negligent, and even sinful. Yes, we have not kept the word of God because of our sins. When we look back and see the weakness of our sins, it is then that we are covered with shame and confusion.

What good have they ever done for us, or will do for us? And yet we have preferred them to keeping the word of God. That would have made us blessed; our sins have brought nothing on us but shame; even in remembering them we are ashamed, but how much more, terribly more, when we shall stand in judgment for those sins; when the words of the prophet come true, and the Judge shall say: "I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, that will never be forgotten." (Jer. xxxiii, 40.)

And instead of keeping the word of God, we find, on reflecting, that we have given ear to the whisper of the devil. Though we knew in our hearts that he was the father of lies, yet we listened to his seducing temptations, we gave half credence to his boasts of making us free and letting us do what we liked. Yes, in actual fact, we have preferred the mock friendship of the devil to being the faithful ones and blessed ones for keeping the word of God.

The shame of it! for we have despised and rejected the friendship and the love of God. We are the children of God—the good God, our Creator, our Father, Who has endowed us with immortal souls, Who has at Baptism enrolled our names in the Book of Life, Who has given us Himself in the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, Who Himself wishes to be our eternal reward in the Kingdom of His glory. We have despised this good God in not keeping His blessed word, but preferring to sin and live in sin. We are those of whom it is said: "Whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. iii, 19.)

Let us change our hearts and be ashamed of what we have done, preferring sinfulness, the friendship of the devil, to the blessedness of keeping the word of God. To be thus ashamed is a grace from God. It is the beginning of humility, of sorrow, of true repentance. This shame for the wasted past will nerve us to begin now to be in earnest, not to allow Lent to pass by carelessly. This holy shame will make us banish dissipation of mind, the love of vain and earthly pleasures, and turn our hearts all to God. This shame will fill our hearts with holy resolve and courage. We are poor indeed in God's sight, for there is nothing but shame to clothe our souls as we kneel before Him. But God is not only good, not only powerful, but God is

merciful. And when He beholds our hearts grieving in shame over our wasted life, His mercy will bless that shame into repentance, and a contrite and humble heart God will not despise.

A GENEROUS OFFER

On page 7 of this issue you will find an advertisement from the Dr. Norvall Medical Co. Ltd., offering to mail to any part of Canada, free of charge, one of their regular size bottles of Dr. Norvall's Stomach and Tonic Tablets, sufficient treatment to last two months.

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GENERAL INTENTION FOR MARCH

RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS XI.

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

How tender, how enduring, how self-sacrificing is the love of Our Blessed Lord for His Church! The reason for this divine manifestation is given by St. Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians: He gave Himself for the Church that He might "sanctify it in the laver of regeneration," and therefore He loves and cherishes it. Man, such is his limited understanding and such his capricious will, may err in determining the value of an object and the price that he will pay to secure it for himself. Not so our Blessed Lord. He knew for what object and for what motive He was to give Himself up, and thus we know, from the light of His example, the value of Holy Mother Church in His divine sight.

But a tremendous consequence follows from this divinely imparted lesson, for the Apostle holds up the love of our Blessed Saviour for His Church as the type and model of conjugal love. "Holy things for the holy," admonishes the ancient ritual. There is no question here of mere refinement, social expediency, or business procedure. Our thoughts are raised, not simply to a higher level, but to another order of excellence, another sphere, as distinct from the other as the spirit is from the flesh, as the divine from the unreasoning tendency of any mere material organism.

"Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days." Here David voices the sentiment and the thought of the devout believer when the divinely instituted sacraments and the divinely guided legislation for safeguarding their sacred character and inviolability are the subject of his pious meditations.

Matrimony is a sacrament which unites a Christian man and woman in lawful marriage. In common with the other six sacraments, matrimony is a divinely instituted means of salvation whose whole supernatural efficacy is among the fruits of the infinite sufferings of our crucified Saviour. The object of this sacrament, as we learn from our authorized religious teachers, is to unite a Christian man and woman in lawful marriage. Though it is true that some deeply significant words are banded to and fro, according to anybody's whim, such careless handling does not change their real meaning nor alter laws which have been framed to direct consciences to safeguard the sacraments, and to protect the rights of all concerned. Since, the simplest and most general meaning of Christian is one who has been aggregated to the family of Christians by the reception of holy baptism, which is the door of the fold, the special heavenly favors of matrimony are bestowed only and whenever a baptized couple duly present themselves to receive the sacrament. Only and always, therefore, is the sacrament of matrimony administered when both contracting parties are Christians in the sense of having received valid baptism. The laver of regeneration necessarily precedes any other sacramental efficacy in the soul.

Lawful marriage is a union that complies with the conditions laid down by the competent authority. The Church is the one sole competent authority to specify and enforce the conditions under which the sacraments are to be administered or received. To the Church, therefore, as to the custodian of the sacraments, it belongs by inalienable right to declare what may be permitted, as well as what may be omitted, and also what has to be exacted under pain of ill-effects or invalidity in the administration of any and all of the seven sacraments.

When a Christian man and woman have been united in lawful marriage by the sacrament of matrimony, they assume forthwith a new and entirely extraordinary relation toward each other, toward all the rest of the faithful, and toward the Church. They are now objects of special legislation, which regards them in the threefold capacity which has just been mentioned; and in each one of these three new relations, they find in the sacrament which they have received an unailing source of those supernatural helps which they need for properly

fulfilling the obligations of the high destiny which is now theirs. It is God's holy will that no sacrament be administered in vain.

With regard to each other, what may have been at the outset only a passing fancy has grown into esteem and blossomed into tender attachment, which is now confirmed by their action and sanctified by sacramental grace. It is confirmed: namely, they have called angels and men to witness that, before heaven and earth, they so promise mutual constancy and fidelity that a deliberate thought against either would be Judas-like treachery. Sacramental grace sanctifies their promise, and arms and shields them against natural human fickleness with the divinely imparted strength to be faithful and true.

But what is fidelity to the marriage bond, if devoid of that love which is symbolized by the love of our Blessed Lord for His Church? It is a mere mathematical formula, true but jejune. Love lightens every burden. It is not simply when the sky is cloudless and the earth is clad in joyous beauty that husband and wife are to show their reciprocal love. Rather, when all fair Nature smiles and bursts into song, their hearts are attuned to tender rejoicing and no discordant note is imminent. But, when the heavens lower and maddened tempests howl, when famine and pestilence stalk abroad, when death pauses in his course and poises a fleshless hand above the latching, then is the husband to find in the confiding love of the wife a summons to all his manliness, constancy, courage. And in return, the wife is to see in his ready response to the call of duty the fulfillment of the hope which was hers at the altar and an appeal to all that is noblest and truest in her own womanhood.

Thus are husband and wife, as mother and father, enlightened and strengthened to demean themselves as besemeth the recipients and guardians of a sacred trust, when they toil and suffer, when they admonish and correct, when they pray for those dear pledges of their mutual love, the children whom God has sent to them for their own consolation and for the credit of the Church.

With regard to the faithful, the married have entered upon new relations and are now viewed in a different light. The unmarried, who have yet to entertain a serious thought about their life-work is to be, may seem to be privileged to go and come with little thought of the morrow. Much as the vessel which is not anchored nor moored drifts unheeded hither and thither, the plaything of tide and current, a certain benevolent condescension overlooks in them, to some extent, what in strict propriety of speech, should be called spendthrift and improvidence, and rashness. Because nobody is dependent upon them, they may jeopard their worldly goods in risky speculations, or their health in excessive indulgence in sports or otherwise. But, should a married man indulge in such conduct, he would evoke a storm of unfavorable criticism, for he now has a sacred duty to one who has placed her worldly happiness and, to a great extent, her spiritual welfare in his keeping. He has a duty and, reciprocally, she has a duty, to shirk which is to sin.

Our forebears in religion built churches, convents, hospitals, and schools and sent forth missionaries to the ends of the earth. All these good works must be set up without the spirit of religion, who are going to fill up the ranks of the clergy and religious? Is there any congenial soil other than the religious education of children for the proper development and preservation of the spirit of religion? Is it not patent, therefore, that to Catholic parents, the Church must, and should, be the "sine qua non," namely, for her priests, her brothers, her nuns, and her other auxiliaries in every good work at home and abroad? Since the indifferent or irreligious home can give but of its own and of what it has, the Church calls in clarion notes to all Catholic parents for their co-operation in the God-given work of applying to souls the all-sufficient means of the Redemption. This call is a call to personal sanctity, a call for them to draw from the sacrament of matrimony further and greater graces for the sanctification of their work as heads of families and as parents. Their sacred duty seems to grow increasingly more difficult, but the sacramental means at their disposal can never be exhausted.

The sacraments, are, indeed, channels of graces more precisely, well-springs of grace; yet men must be ordained for the due administration of most of them, and men must be reared in the fear and love of God that any of them may produce the plenitude of their effects in the souls of the recipients. Who is to rear these children of God's choice and predilection? Who is to guide the feet of the young in the way of God's commandments? Whose counsel will incline them to choose a life-work in keeping with God's designs? All this has been fully provided for, and with a divine munificence, when in the sacrament of matrimony, parents find, together with grace for their personal sanctification and their mutual fidelity in joy and sorrow, the supernatural helps which they must needs have, to be faithful to

the trust reposed in them when God sends them children as recruits for His hosts among the blessed.

Let those, then, who desire to marry, marry in the fear of God, as the angel said to Tobias: "For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as will shut out God from themselves, and from their mind," invite, not God's blessing, of which they stand in need throughout life's pilgrimage, but God's curse, because to them holy things have not been holy and by their lack of religious spirit and motive they have risked peace of mind and happiness. Let those called to the conjugal state prayerfully reflect that they are answerable to their life partners for their happiness in time and may be in eternity, to society for its well-being, to the Church for the continuance of all her soul-saving works and to the Blessed Saviour of the world for the inexhaustible treasures of the sacrament of matrimony. St. Paul sums it all up in a few words: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification."

HENRY J. SWIFT, S. J.

CIVIC DUTIES

The excellent address on "Civic Duties," delivered by Sir Charles Russell, the eminent English jurist, before a body of his fellow Catholics during the recent electoral campaign in England, may well be the subject of editorial comment and approval in every Catholic journal throughout the world. It enunciates in clear and able fashion some of the basic moral principles that are so widely flouted in these days of decadent faith and pagan morals. There is assuredly something rotten, not only in the State of Denmark but in every other country that has, in whole or in part, inherited the "blessings" of the Reformation. The creedal aberrations that have been spawned by that monster have in turn produced their brood of destructive moral theories. It is against these errors, that are undermining the pillars of society, today, that Sir Charles uttered his sterling advice in regard to the particular civic duty of a conscientious user of the suffrage.

"What," he asks, "should be the attitude of the Catholic citizen? Should he come forward, should he assert himself, or should he retire, saying humbly, 'This is not for me?' I say to you most solemnly and most earnestly: It is the hour for advance. True, we are a small body commixed with a multitude. But the power of any particular body is not measured by heads; it is to be counted by character, by courage, by energy. It requires but little yeast to raise a batch of loaves; and if we only proceed with honesty, earnestness, and a clear conception of our principles, our influence will be far in excess of our numerical strength. I say that if, possessing this privilege of voting, and this power of influence, you do not use them, you will be false to your fellow-Catholics, to your fellow-Englishmen, and to the whole of humanity."

Continuing, this distinguished English Catholic summarized some other duties of citizenship and drew from them some truths which call for special emphasis in these evil times: "There is one more duty, and that is to bring up your children, who will be your successors, to be able to use this power wisely and well. It is necessary not only to impress upon them the grave responsibility which lies with them in using the vote, but to teach them the principles which should guide them and govern their minds in coming to political decisions. You may ask: What are the principles of Catholic citizenship, and where are they to be found? The Church does not seek to indicate or dictate to any nation or any body of men the particular system under which they should live. It does not indicate the particular party for which they should vote. But what the Church does, as you will find in the Encyclical on the subject, is to lay down the principles which must govern our actions and our thoughts."

"Let me briefly outline these principles. In the first place, the Church bids that the unit of civilization is the family. The family bears the same relation to civilization as the brick does to a building; if the brick crumbles, the structure falls. Without family life the nations of the world would relapse into barbarism.

"Many deductions follow this central fact. In the first place, if there is a family, the father must be in a position, provided he is willing honestly to work, to demand and to receive a living wage, a living wage which, in the language used thirty or forty years ago by Pope Leo XIII., shall be sufficient to keep a frugal family in decent comfort." That is the demand that has been made for decade after decade by Popes speaking to the whole world on behalf of the workers.

"The next deduction is that the father, as head of that family, shall have the inalienable right of bringing up his children according to his conscience, and of having instruction given to his children as to their duty to God and man in accordance with his conscience. When we speak of our uniting and fighting for the education question, that is what we mean. If the State takes over the duty from parents of compulsorily educating their children, then they must do it according to the conscience of the father.

"It further necessitates that the father should be entitled to the fruits of his labor, that if he is able, by his frugality, hard work, or business aptitude, to save, or build up a business, he can transmit that as a provision for his widow and his children. Man has, therefore, the right to own property that must not be stolen or even taken from him by the State without due and adequate compensation."

As the Ave Maria says, in its comments on this passage: "There is not, of course, anything particularly new in the foregoing statements; but there is much that needs to be repeated time and time again in this country not less than in England. The organized attack on denominational schools, and the communistic tendencies of large masses of our population, emphasize the importance of our getting back to the first principles of governmental rights—and limitations." Catholic Union and Times.

OLD ANTICLERICAL PUTS LOT OF WATER IN HIS WINE
Paris, Jan. 11.—"If I had been told ten years ago that one day I should be part in a bishop's banquet, I should have been greatly surprised." These words were spoken at the banquet given at the time of the consecration of Msgr. Guichard of the Holy Ghost Fathers, the new Bishop of Congo, by M. Augagneur, Governor General of French Equatorial Africa. As a matter of fact, M. Augagneur, who was formerly mayor of Lyons, deputy to the Chamber and a minister in various radical socialist cabinets, was always one of the most fervent disciples of the famous Combes.

Defeated in the elections of 1910, he became a colonial governor, and since then, as the popular saying goes, "he has put a lot of water in his wine." Having witnessed the meritorious work of the missionaries, he is now more inclined to praise them than to persecute them.

At the banquet for Msgr. Guichard, at Brazzaville, he quoted, in his address, the words of the Doge of Venice at the Court of Versailles: "What astonishes me most, is to see myself here," but he added: "however, my place is here, for I wish to pay tribute to the patriotic work of the predecessor of Msgr. Guichard, Msgr. Augagneur, the great missionary who, like Saint Paul, claiming his title of Roman citizen, always knew how to demand his title of Frenchman."

After speaking a few words in praise of the Catholic mission, M. Augagneur expressed a desire to see the extension of this patriotic work, realizing the old motto: "Gesta Dei per Francos."

Search Your Attic For Fortunes in Old Stamps
Among the old letters of many families are hundreds of very rare stamps. Many have been found and sold for small fortunes. Single envelopes have been sold for as high as \$5,000.00 and many have brought upwards of \$100.00 each. It sounds "fishy," but it's true. They are rare, not because there are only a few, but for the simple reason that most of them have remained stored away and forgotten, in old trunks, family chests and closets.

Make a thorough search through your attic or storeroom for these old letters. The stamps I am especially interested in are the early U. S. issues on envelopes Canada, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Vancouver, also a few of the early issues of Great Britain and Colonies. Loose stamps I do not buy—only those on the original envelopes. So don't cut them off the envelopes.

Letters mailed since 1875 bear mostly common stamps, and these I do not care for. I collect nothing but stamps, and am not interested in buying old relics, old newspapers, books or coins. There are many stamps of different issues which are similar in appearance. It is therefore impossible for me to quote values from descriptions. I must first see the stamps.

When you have gotten all the envelopes together wrap the bunch carefully, using cardboard to protect them from becoming wrinkled and creased. Please don't write on the face of envelope—I am fully acquainted with the issues even though the postmark shows no year date. Don't use pins. Private letters inside the envelopes may be kept by you, as it is only the envelope I want. (This would not of course be possible with the old-fashioned folded letter, as the letter itself forms the "envelope.")

If you have reason to believe that your envelopes are of special value, send them by registered mail. In order to avoid having the package held up for customs examination, mark on the outside "Id. stamps, Not Dutiable." I hold myself responsible for the care of such envelopes while in my possession. On receipt I will examine them and if found of no value, or if my offer is unsatisfactory, I guarantee their safe return to you.

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