

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

THE HOLY MASS

"Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" (John vi. 5.)

The Gospel read to-day, my dear brethren, vividly brings to mind that other Bread which Christ was to bless and give for the food of our souls—that other bread, to consecrate which every priest has been entrusted with the power. The Gospel is so well chosen for this time. "For a great multitude followed Him," as we know our Catholic people do in the holy time of Lent. And "the Pasch, the festival day of the Jews, was near at hand." The Church, like her Lord, is anxious to feed her children.

The Holy Mass, with Communion, either spiritual or sacramental, is forced upon us as the subject of our devout thoughts to day. Need weary reminding, any exhortation about the Mass? Surely not. It is a Catholic's privilege and glory to be present at the Holy Sacrifice. To be allowed to come, to know he has a right to come, to know that he is so welcome, should make him look forward to and long for the holy time of Mass. Calvary to be renewed upon our altar, and we poor sinners made welcome, to pray, to be forgiven, to unite our hearts to the Victim offered for us. The bread and wine to be consecrated, and we to partake! The chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? And the bread, which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord? (1 Cor. x. 16.)

Yes, Christ is given to us as the strength of our souls, the health, the growth, life for our bodies, are its results, as they are for our bodies, from the food and drink of which we must necessarily partake. How seldom do we find people voluntarily starving themselves to death—it would be a madman's deed! Aye, starve their bodies; but their souls, how common it is, scarcely noticed by others, and they themselves that do it think thereby (missing Mass and Communion) that they show their independence and superiority. What utter folly, starving, perishing, through our own fault, and ready to our hand the table laid, the minister of the Lord blessing and distributing the Sacrament! Oh, here is the food of the wayfarer, the life-giving nourishment in which our souls are strengthened to walk and persevere through this exile to the land of the Blessed!

Attending Mass, receiving the Blessed Sacrament are so meritorious because they are done in faith. The merit, my dear brethren, is beyond our calculation and understanding; but we know this: that we cannot give such honour, glory, and thanksgiving to God by any other means. We cannot so efficaciously supplicate His pardon and mercy at any other time. We cannot ask Him for favours, graces, privileges at any other time, that we can so confidently trust to obtaining as we can during Mass. We believe in the Holy Sacrifice, we believe that Christ is present, the very Saviour that died for us. We believe that which is consecrated, though it may look like bread, is truly and really the Body of Jesus Christ. We believe—we do not see—and the blessing and reward of faith is bestowed upon us. And the union of Christ and the souls of men in the Holy Eucharist is so complete that we can say, in the words of the Mass: "Through Him and with Him and in Him there is to the Father and the Holy Spirit all honor and glory." Oh, the merit of the faith and the union! "This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven: that if any man eat of it he may not die. . . . If any man eat of this Bread he shall live forever." (John vi. 50, 52.)

Christ could do no more, for He has given us Himself, and given us Himself freely. If He had made it a difficult and arduous task to attend Mass, men might have had an excuse but perhaps they would have been more in earnest. But Christ has given us Himself, freely and actually years for us to come. He is bestowing the benefits, and yet is so anxious and pleased that He might be receiving them.

How is it, my dear brethren, that men do neglect our Blessed Lord in the Holy Mass? Is it want of faith? No, not as regards the man to whom we refer—the Catholics. They know well what the Mass is and the obligation under mortal sin to attend if they are able. Where can one find a reason to refuse this loving invitation of the Saviour! The real reasons are not the foolish excuses, sometimes heard, that one does not like the priest; that home is so disturbed one cannot attend; that one is as good as those who do go, and the rest. The real reason is that they are so entangled in their sins that they cannot go, they are not free to go. Their pride will not like to own this; they are slaves, and not masters. Oh, we could go if we chose, they may say. No, you cannot; that is not true. St. Paul tells that we cannot say the Holy Name Jesus except by the power of the Holy Ghost. Much less then, can you attend Holy Mass except the grace of the Holy Spirit is given you. And you must make room for the grace of God in your heart by turning out the sins and bad habits and indulgences that disgrace that which should be the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. This is the work of Lent. Give up sin, pray to God, and He will grant you grace to come to Mass, and to prepare your soul for Communion. Be afraid of that state

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of lethargy, which overcomes so many souls and deprives them of the strength and merit of Holy Mass. Cultivate in your souls devotion and love for the Blessed Sacrifice in which Christ our Lord so freely offers Himself—our Redemption now, our reward hereafter. Those who are devote to Holy Mass have only one longing—to make Christ King of their hearts; that all they do and suffer should be for Him, that all their love and loyalty should own allegiance to no one else save Him.

WENCZLAUS OR HUS?

Joseph A. Vaughan, S. J., in America

The Czecho Slovaks are now free. President Wilson has recognized the independence of Moravia and Bohemia. Immediately it becomes the duty of every newspaper editor, magazine writer and super-luminating scribe to pass the little-known corner of the earth in review. And, sad to say, the narrations are such that historians will be tempted to think that the popular writers have eaten of the insane root.

That takes the reason prisoner. Or is it that "the fatal divorce of reason and passion" has obscured their vision? Certainly it is not lack of education nor experience, nor perhaps of good-will, but rather may be a certain poverty of disposition which manifests itself by the indifference or inability to seek the sources of knowledge; not active opposition to truth, but passive indifference. An unconscious world will believe anything. An editor is not necessarily an encyclopedist, Arthur Brisbane to the contrary notwithstanding. And someone has wisely remarked knowledge does not consist in knowing everything, but in knowing where to find it.

Behind every great wave of patriotism there must be found a personality, either past or present. Belgium has its Albert, England its Haig, France its Foch and America its Pershing. So, too, these heralds of Moravian and Bohemian glories here in our American land have glanced into the depths of history, depths that are far from transparent, and lo, they have discovered John Hus, Hus, the liberator; Hus the man, whose spirit shall free a bonded nation from the German yoke. Did their encyclopedic knowledge fail to decry the anachronism? Hus, a Catholic priest and advocate of the doctrines of Wyclif, already condemned in England, died in 1415; Bohemia and Moravia came under the rule of the Hapsburgs in 1526, 111 years after the death of Hus. But why quibble about dates? Hus was a liberator; it makes no difference whether he sought to free the mind from the spiritual authority of Rome or the legal authority of the Hapsburgs. A man must be found, a personality, even though Catholicism and Germany be identified.

There followed the Hussite wars, lasting over a period of thirty years, all taking place about one hundred years before the Hapsburgs came into power. What was the origin of these wars? History reveals that 459 Moravian and Bohemian nobles, gathering together, took up the gauntlet and appended their seals to a joint note to the King and Council (Consentance), setting forth their conviction; that the sentence of Hus was unjust and insulting to their country; that there were no heresies in Bohemia, that any assertion to the contrary was itself the gravest heresy. This document is dated September 2, 1416. Three days

RECONSTRUCTION

The world, as we well know, is in the throes of reconstruction, following on the heel of four years of bloody warfare. It is being made over, rebuilt and revitalized, a painful and tedious operation. The period following the close of the Civil War was one of reconstruction for our country. It was well remembered by the people of those days, and is marked in history as a time of anxiety and suspense, of trouble and turmoil, and a period of unrest. The world has been experiencing the same thing since the close of the World War, but on a universal scale. Reconstruction or readjustment is affecting all classes of all peoples, and in every sphere of activity. In the tizmo struggle of world powers many national edifices and institutions (fixtures for centuries) were demolished, weakened fundamentally or torn apart, leaving nothing but empty shells. Now that the struggle has ceased, there remains the work of clearing away the debris, repairing what is worth while, and rebuilding in a bigger and better way. Provincialism and nationalism, it seems are no more. All such lines have been swept away. We are now world patriots and have world ideas. Hence, we talk of and plan for world-reconstruction, and world safety, and this is a new way. The old ideas of security through armament and national facts and alliances are discarded. We are to have one set of principles or laws, a common code of justice and an international police for all nations; the same doctrines and code of morality, the same means of order and safety, and all under one head. It sounds like a definition of the mark of unity that distinguishes the true Church of Christ. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If the upset and suffering of reconstruction will prevent future wars, then we will take the dose, smiling. But scarcely a week passes that we do not hear a peep or a paeon of reconstruction in religion, too. We, Catholics, are not surprised that man made religions and religious institutions should be toppled over or wrecked by the world struggle. They could not stand the gaff for they were made of straw and wood and not founded on the rock of Truth. But their leaders preach and prate as if all religion was to be dissolved and remade. We have read quite a few such dissertations by various ministers, but have learned little. If we are to be made over in our religion, our most sacred possession, we should like more light on the subject. We know what we are; what we should be according to change, we know not. Are we to renounce what is fixed and certain and satisfying for what is vague and rapid? Even so renowned a neighbor as the Rev. Mr. Hillis cannot lull us into acquiescence with his sounding phrases which tested, sound hollow and lack the ring of truth. With all due charity (acquired before the War) we quote his article from the Christian Herald:

"Man have to gotten the non-essential and remembered only the big mother Christian ideas. When the fields are bare in April, the traveler sees nothing but the fences that separate the fields. When the corn grows tall and ripens, the fences are blotted out and only the grain appears. Two million young men at the front have learned charity, tolerance, Christian Unity is approaching. The separations are going. The barriers are dissolving. The soldiers caught in the Gulf stream. Never was faith in God so strong. Never was the horizon so bright for the Christian religion. The days which our fathers longed to see, and died without seeing, have now drawn near."

Nothing could be more desirable than Christian unity. "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Catholicity is well as unity is a mark of the true Church of Christ. The doors of that Church are ever open to receive all who come to the Light. This re-awakened faith in God should fill that Church which teaches men all truth, truth that is one, unchanging, "unreconstructible"; that Church which directs and instructs men with a voice of authority, infallibility and indefectibility, a voice that never falters, that is the same for all, that never compromises, that gives confidence and security. For Catholics, reconstruction applies only to the individual soul. For the Church, as the teaching and governing body left by Christ to bring men to salvation, the word has no force. Catholic chaplains could tell of this kind of reconstruction; the making over and bringing back of souls that strayed from the true fold of Christ. The homeward of priests will also bear witness to this religious reconstruction in the number of converts (soldiers, sailors and their relatives) to the Faith in the months to come. Such is Catholic reconstruction, in war or in peace. So it has been from time immemorial; so it will be till man is no more.—Brooklyn Tablet.

THE READY CATHOLIC WOMAN

It is not ours to say how the grace of God shall come or when it will come; it is the free gift of God. Some months since a prominent actress was received into the Church. She had attained success; had everything that the world could give, and lived only for the world without a thought of religion. But she was not happy. All my life," she writes, "I had experienced an inexplicable longing for something which I seemed never able to gratify. It was not success, it was not love, it was not money, for I had all of these, yet I kept right on searching for this missing link in my life. How little I dreamed of the truth—that it was faith."

She never received any religious education. After she entered the theatrical profession she never gave a thought to churches or religion. "Sacred things and images," she says, "always gave me the shivers and made me recoil." "One day when she was convalescing from an illness a friend who was a good Catholic suggested that she accompany him to Mass. She did so. That visit to the church accomplished her conversion. It was one of those means that God uses to bring His grace to a soul. But again one must ask, would the faith have come if that Catholic friend had not suggested going to Mass?

The incident gives food for thought. How unlikely it seemed that she would ever become a Catholic. Yet are there not many who might repeat this experience if their Catholic friends were charitable to point out the way? The Catholic should ever have the zeal of an apostle. He should consider himself his brother's keeper; he should ever be ready to take advantage of the opportunity to lead other souls into the light. Sometimes a mere hint is sufficient. What joy one should feel in the knowledge that he has been the humble instrument in the conversion of even one soul!

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new step evidenced progress toward attaining the state of mind of a people at war. But that is avowedly not the outlook on life for a nation that hopes to spend the remainder of time in perfect concord with a peace-loving world. We must lay aside the things of war, over and beyond more uniforms cannons and airplanes. For the priests who have been released from military service the Holy Father has prescribed a spiritual retreat. That will accomplish the necessary reconstruction of the mind and heart from those of the warrior to those of the pastor. We, too, though we may never have contributed more than our money to the war, need this regeneration of mind. For us, too, it is to be had only in spiritual exercises. Lent, with its days of prayer and fasting, is the retreat that the layman needs to purge from his mind the harsh judgments and condemnations of the day of war which obstruct the framing of a kindly Christian attitude of sympathy and toleration toward all mankind.—New World.

THE ANNUNCIATION

"Hail Mary, full of grace," the Angel said. Our Lady bows her head, and is ashamed; She has a Bridegroom who may not be named. Her mortal flesh bears Him who conquers death. How in the dust her spirit groveleth; Too bright a Sun before her eyes has flamed. Too fair a herald joy too high proclaims. And human lips have trembled in God's breath.

MEN AND BOLSHEVISM

Bolshevism is often in the mill these days; and perhaps it is well that it should be, for a smooth running stone always separates the chaff from the grain. That there is a deal of the former stuff in Bolshevism is great heaps of it, in fact—no man will deny; that there are some good kernels in it, also, is not so apparent at first sight. This latter fact is probably the reason why men are heaping indiscriminate condemnation upon the movement and the philosophy that actuates it. But is this procedure altogether just and prudent. Heaven and earth should clamor against the lust and needless violence that is reported to accompany the Russian revolution, but heaven and earth should also take thought of the underlying causes of the great convulsion. Oppressed people are seeking liberty, let them have it; hungry people are clamoring for bread, fill their gaping mouths; homeless people demand a plot of ground; give them two or even three. But above all else give them justice. For long bleak years they were treated as slaves, deprived of the exercise of those fundamental rights which distinguish upstanding men from mere clods that are driven hither and thither by a master who may be a man, but more often is despair.

The Bolsheviki had grievances that became too great for human endurance, and just at the critical moment the agitator fanned their souls into a flame which bids fair to encircle the globe. Quench the flames by all means rather than put the Bolsheviki in a position where reason will compel them to do it themselves. They are wrong in many things, brutally wrong; they are right in other things, eminently right. And if those who disagree with them condemn all their thoughts and words and deeds in the same hasty breath, the result will be that when the Soviet spreads to other countries, as it will, undoubtedly, the world will be one red bayonet dripping with the blood of western civilization. It is time for the leaders of men to tell the Bolsheviki that if, tired of exploitation by Czars and capitalists, they wish to be governed by the Soviet, that is their privilege, but that it is neither their right nor their privilege to violate the natural and the Divine law. What is needed just now is not universal condemnation, but persuasion by which the Bolsheviki retaining their favorite mode of government, will yet inform it by sound principles which will counsel that God, Caesar and the proletariat

PREPARE IN LENT FOR PEACE

We are in a transition period, passing from a time of war to a era of peace. It was striking how slowly in America assumed the mental attitude necessary for a successful prosecution of our purpose in France. From our first intention of merely financing the Allies, we determined to give them the encouragement that a small American force in France would beget, and concluded by raising an army of three million men. Each

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receive, each one, his due. Less clamor, less denunciation, more reason, more persuasion. The Bolsheviki are not altogether wrong, though, alas, they are seriously wrong in some ways.—America.

ASSURES WORKERS OF HIS FRIENDSHIP

POPE BENEDICT WILL ADHERE TO POLICY OF POPE LEO XIII. IN ATTITUDE TOWARDS LABOR. The Rome correspondent of the New York World reports that Pope Benedict recently received in audience a delegation from a popular Catholic association which is largely made up of workmen. During his address the Pope stated that he sympathizes with the aspirations of labor throughout the world and realizes that the task of the next few years must be the betterment of labor conditions. His Holiness promises to help to obtain this betterment when the time comes, although he said that this is too early a date for him definitely to state his programme.

THE HARVEST OF THE WAR

The toll of human life taken by the world war, as summed up in the Manchester Guardian, reaches the stupendous figure of 17,500,000. Yet even in this number, surpassing all our powers of realization, does not include all the deaths indirectly attributable to the war. It includes, however, a mortality of 4,000,000 from influenza and pneumonia due to war conditions. The total number of Allied losses are placed at 5,500,000, while the deaths suffered by their opponents are computed at little more than half this figure, or something over 2,900,000. The loss of life for the British and Indian Empire is estimated at 898,824. Italy is said to have lost three-fifths as many through diseases in the war zone (800,000) as through casualties in battle. The number of Armenians, Syrians, Greeks and Jews massacred by the Turks is given as 4,000,000. A million Serbian civilians are thought to have succumbed to the sword, to hunger or disease. Truly a terrible muster-roll of the dead!—America.

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