

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

FEAST OF THE PATRONAGE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

To-day, my dear brethren, the Church celebrates the Feast of the patronage of the Blessed Virgin. Let us stop a moment and consider what is meant by this title, as given to our most Immaculate and blessed Mother.

You remember that there is a similar feast on the third Sunday after Easter, in honor of her glorious spouse, St. Joseph; and that he has lately been given the title of Patron of the Universal Church. Is it, then, in this sense that we are to understand the Patronage of the Blessed Virgin; is it that she is the patroness and protectress of the Church in general, in its continual conflict with the powers of darkness? Yes, we may certainly understand it in this way.

But there is another sense in which to understand her patronage, and to avail ourselves of it, besides this one of her protection of the Church as a whole; and this other is practically more important for us to realize. It is that she is the special patron and protector of each one of us individually, in our own special needs and trials, and in our own special way to wage on our own account with the enemies of our salvation.

You know that we are all encouraged to choose certain saints whose name we bear, or to whom we have a special devotion, as patrons, to obtain for us the blessings and helps we need, temporal as well as spiritual. And there can be no doubt that if we do thus select certain patrons they will perform for us the office which we desire; and though they may not always obtain for us those things which our imperfect judgment fixes on as most desirable, they will reward us with even greater blessings than we ask if we are faithful to them.

But it is quite plain that we should not omit, and certainly it is not the custom of Catholics to omit, the name of the Blessed Virgin from the list of patron saints, whatever others may be chosen with her. The Church, in establishing this festival, seems herself to officially constitute our Blessed Lady as the patron of each one of us, to whom we are to have recourse in all our difficulties, of whatever kind they may be, that we may find a safe way through them. We have the assurance of constant experience that if we follow the mind of the Church in this way we shall not be disappointed. "Remember," says St. Bernard, in the beautiful prayer "Memorare," which it is to be hoped we say often—"Remember, O most pious Virgin Mary, it is a thing unheard of that thou ever forsakest those who have recourse to thee." Let us then also remember this; and whatever special devotions, or helps to salvation, we may select, never forget this, the most universal and indispensable of all, of our recourse to the Blessed Mother of God.

And let us remember particularly that above all is the Blessed Virgin the advocate of sinners. If, then, we wish ourselves to escape from the power of some temptations or evil habits which are threatening our ruin, let us not forget to go to her. She is sinless herself, has more than the compassion of a mother for us; let us beg the powerful help of her intercession, and let us also ask her to rescue others who, it may be, are more tempted than ourselves.

And it seems to be also not without reason that this feast is placed in the month of November, that we may remember that the holy souls now suffering for sin in Purgatory are especially dear to our Blessed Mother, and that she wishes us to pray for them, and to present our prayers herself, as she is their patron too. Let us, then, say at least some Hail Marys (and why not the beads?) every day this month, that she may bring to heaven during it many souls, who will not forget to ask her intercession for us when we shall be in the same need.

THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT.

A certain danger exists, for a certain class of people, even among Catholics, in relation to so-called spiritualism, (better named spiritism), theosophism, clairvoyance, and similar pretensions to dealing with occult, mysterious things. Fortune-telling, table-tipping, have their attractions for certain dispositions. It is not the giddy, heedless girl alone, who will sometimes go to "consult" a fortune-teller; nor is it the uneducated man and woman alone, who will be drawn into the wiles of Christian Science, or of Hindoo philosophy. It is of cultured Athens we are told, in the Acts of the Apostles, that St. Paul found the city "wholly given to idolatry," and that "all the Athenians... employed themselves in nothing else, but either in telling or in hearing some new thing." And it was to the Romans that he wrote of men who, "professing themselves to be wise, became fools."

Now the Catholic Church maintains and upholds constantly the truth that there is an invisible world, and above it, transcending it, far beyond all expression and all knowledge, there is the invisible God. All around us are invisible angels, our guardian angels, guiding us, loving us, defending us; and there are fallen evil angels also, invisible likewise, with an invisible power to tempt and slay. The Catholic Church teaches that our dead are not dead as to the spirit; either in heaven or purgatory or hell those souls are living, we know not where or how, but they are living, and we can offer up our prayers and Holy Communions for them; and if

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they are detained in purgatory, those prayers will avail to reach them, and to comfort them; and the holy souls, whether in purgatory or in heaven, will pray for us, and they love us still.

"I believe in the Communion of Saints," is one of the fundamental articles of the Apostles' Creed. We live in a world of spiritual things. God Himself came down to earth and took our nature upon Him, being "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary" as the Creed positively teaches. The things of the visible earth and the things of the invisible world have been brought together through the incarnation of the Eternal Son of God.

Therefore it is right that we should desire the things of the Spirit; it is right that we should invoke the saints; the reality of the Communion of Saints is so true a thing that the Church herself allows us to invoke one against fever for instance, and go to another about trouble with our eyesight. We know perfectly well that all power comes from God, and that He alone is worthy of our adoration, our absolute devotion, our boundless love. But, just as in our homelife, our family, we go to our mother, our brother, our sister, with our requests for comfort, aid, counsel, knowing, all along, that it is really God Who gives them any power to help at all, as Catholics to help at all, so Catholics go to St. Anne, St. Anthony, St. Joseph, and above all our Blessed Mother, because God desires to prove by this the truth and the reality of the Communion of Saints. What said Eliseus the prophet to his terrified servant, who brought him news of the angry king's army encamped against the city? "Fear not: for there are more with us than with them." And then Eliseus prayed and said: "Lord, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw: and behold the mountain was full of horses, and chariots of fire round about Eliseus."

But it is only under the Church's guidance that we, frail, human beings may presume to deal with mysterious and hidden things. Have we not the holiest and highest way of dealing with the world invisible? In the Blessed Sacrament we truly and really are made one with Jesus Christ; truly and really He is in our tabernacles; all heaven is with Him, the Eternal God. And in the heart of every Catholic, who is in the state of grace, really and truly lives the Holy Spirit of God as in a tabernacle; through Him indeed the things of the Spirit become our own, in a path of peace, purity, and holy love.

But against all superstitious dealings with the unseen world the Church sternly lifts her warning voice. The catechism says plainly: "Those who make use of spells and charms, or who believe in dreams, in mediums, spiritists, fortune-tellers, and the like, sin against the first commandment, because they attribute to creatures perfections which belong to God alone." Shall those who dabble in any way with these things be guiltless? and are they not putting themselves in touch with evil influences that may lead them into insanity—or worse, into both mental and spiritual shipwreck? The Lord, instructing the people of Israel regarding these abuses and consulting the dead, says in Deuteronomy:

* Neither let there be found among you any one that consulteth dreams and omens, neither let there be any charmer, nor any one that consulteth pythonic spirits, or fortune-tellers or seeketh the truth from the dead, for the Lord abhorreth all these things. —Sacred Heart Review.

Value of a Day

Sitting down quietly at a late hour of the evening to enjoy a "treasured volume," I became so absorbed in the beautiful thoughts of a favorite author I did not realize the time until I was aroused by the sound of the clock on a neighboring church tower striking the midnight hour.

The day was done. How strangely impressive the thought! Never before had I been so deeply conscious of the value of a day and the seriousness of its close.

Again and again we are reminded in the Bible of the value of a day. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "Give us this day our daily bread." "Why stand ye all the day idle?" "Son, go to work to-day in My vineyard." "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." The value of a day is continually emphasized in the Word of God.

John Ruskin hung a beautifully illuminated motto over his bed. It contained but one word—"To-day." He desired every morning on arising to be reminded of the value of the new day.

How may we live a profitable and helpful life? Ruskin gives us this wise counsel: "Let every day's dawn of morning be to you as the beginning of life, and let every setting sun be to you as a close; let every one of these short lives leave its sure record of some kindly things done for others—some goodly strength and knowledge gained for yourselves."

Bishop Blacked Priest's Shoes.

The Ave Maria tells this anecdote of a beloved American prelate: "Preaching at the anniversary Mass for the late Bishop Curtis, Father Mickie, a friend of thirty years' standing of the deceased prelate, said of him: It was always: 'Follow me.' I remember on one occasion, when I was rooming with him in some out-of-the-way place, awaking in the morning to find he was up before me and quietly blacking my shoes. He was my Bishop at the time. 'You shall not do that,' 'Why not?' said he. 'I may as well do it, as I have finished my own.' The only undignified thing for a man in sin, he would say; and menial occupation lowers no man. Who could help learning a little in such a school as that and with such a teacher? Let each of us reform himself, and that will be the best way to reform and convert the country.' Such was the method he proposed to me, and himself ever followed. And how successful the method proved in leading its fellows to a notable degree of Christian perfection is becoming better and better known as the months go by."

Converted By False Accusations.

In a letter to the London Catholic Times A. de Reya, a merchant sailor, writing from the steamship Drake, relates how he has investigated charges against the Catholic Church, and in every instance found them to be false. The result is that he has decided to become a Catholic. He writes: "I have been going to sea now, on and off, for the last seventeen years, and in that time I have visited nearly all parts of the globe. I am a Protestant, and am shortly to become a convert to the one and only true faith. I have in my travels the last few years read and heard a great deal that has been said against the Catholic Church. In my spare time I have investigated, as far as it has been

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