

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

THE NEED OF A WELL-INFORMED LAYTY
 "But some of them said: He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils. And others tempting, asked of him a sign from heaven." (Luke, xii, 10, 11.)

A wicked mind and wise utterances scarcely ever go together. An evil conscience always will practically prevent a man from speaking wise and true things. He often thinks that his words are convincing and even overpowering; but he learns differently when a wise and truthful critic exposes their real meaning. Truth never can come out in all its beauty and fullness, unless men's minds are properly directed. Passion will keep the truth back as much as possible; rash judgment will not allow its open and full manifestation. Minds and hearts must be pure and noble, in order that the truth be made known. If these qualities are not found in them, we never can be sure that their words and their judgment are laden with truth.

In the Gospel of this Sunday we see these facts confirmed. Our Lord was performing wonderful works, and the people around were admiring them. Not all of these people, however, were free of malice. The very works they saw did not seem to convince them. To seek for an excuse, they went to extremes and said that the works of the great Master were performed through Beelzebub, the prince of devils. This assertion may have seemed strong to themselves; they probably thought that it would influence the crowd against Jesus and His works. But their minds were too misdirected and their hearts too poisoned to judge properly and feel rightly toward Jesus. However, Our Lord, in His infinite wisdom, needed but little argument to show how foolish were their utterances. Why should Satan work against himself? Why should he undo the work that he and his fellow wicked spirits had accomplished? Satan was too wise ever to have done this. What he had accomplished was done through hatred for God. Now he would not, as it were, repent and undo his work, and depart from the place where he was able to continue his success. To do so, he knew would tend to the utter destruction of many of his already accomplished designs. Christ made this truth clear to the crowd. He thus enlightened the minds of those who were really ignorant, and prevented the effects that might have resulted from the unwise sayings of the evil-minded.

Catholics of today should learn a wholesome lesson from this fact recorded in this Sunday's Gospel. They need much courage, and must always be ready to show their convictions. Arguments similar to the ones used against the works of Jesus are continually being uttered against the Church. There is no truth in them, but they must be stripped, in order to be exposed. They are clothed in a language that appears convincing, and are confirmed by facts that seem undeniable. The fervent, earnest Catholic, however, can contest them and show in what they are lacking.

The facts that the Church's daily exhibits are but another work of Jesus. He is in the Church, with the Church, guiding, enriching, and making her fruitful. The great work she has ever done, and continues with the self-same energy and devotion to perform, is a proof of Christ's presence within her. Yet, how little of this truth does the non-Catholic world admit. It ascribes the Church's work to false motives. Consider what is so often said of our devotion to the saints, of the veneration of relics, and the respect we show the crucifix and sacred images! It is all put down as superstition. How disrespectfully many of our dissenting brethren speak of our Religious Orders! The world reaps innumerable benefits from them. Their lives are an open book that all may read, yet what slanders and lies are spread broadcast about them? Holy men and women, blessed with vocations from God, are ridiculed and are accused of being unfit for the world, and hence forced to enter the cloister as a refuge. How unwisely and maliciously they judge of the aims and intentions of these self-sacrificing individuals. They give every reason but the right one for the actions of these Religious.

How disrespectfully are our sacraments spoken of and treated? Penance, especially, is made light of. Its true meaning seems never to have come home to its maligners. The tradition of the ages, since the pseudo-Reformation, has instilled into their minds and hearts a totally wrong conception of the meaning of this great sacrament and an inveterate hatred of it. Men who are supposed to represent God stand in pulpits Sunday after Sunday, and aim untruthful and vilifying words against this great institution of Christ.

Catholics know the truth, they are convinced of it, they have felt its results since they became conscious of their state. Why should they allow the liar and the slanderer openly to assail their most sacred convictions? When prudence advises it, they must raise their voice and use their logic in the defense of their holy religion. They never should be swayed by the false arguments of unbelievers and scoffers. They especially should not heed the

words of men ignorant of true Catholicity, though learned in many other things. These latter, perhaps, are among the most dangerous enemies Catholics can meet. Secular learning, however, has little to do with faith. A man may be a Solomon in worldly sciences, and yet be totally ignorant of the true teachings of Christ. The world today abounds in this class and no doubt we are all familiar with their tactics.

We must be ever faithful to Christ's teachings, as they are handed down to us by the apostles whom He chose and sent over the world to preach His doctrine. Their successors are our guides today, and those men who pose as innovators and ever are crying out that the world needs a new religion fitted to the times, should be sedulously avoided. What the modern world needs is a correct knowledge of the old religion—the only true one—the one founded by Christ on Peter—a rock. Let us as Catholics by our lives and our words continue to practice and teach this religion, and defend it on all occasions.

ST. PATRICK

In the fifth century, St. Patrick, the son of noble parents, lived in Northern Gaul. There all were Christians, all lived contentedly and happily, enjoying "the peace of Christ in the reign of Christ." One family, however, was to lose for a time its earthly joy, but not the peace of Christ. When in his sixteenth year, about to blossom forth to manhood, the joy and the beauty of his home, Patrick was snatched away and sold as a slave to pagans. What a blow and tearing grief to his parents! His father lost the pride of his life, his mother was almost beside herself with grief. "If he were dead we could commune with him, but gone! O Lord, give us strength to bear Thy will! Whither is he gone? What of his faith? O Lord, preserve our child, deprived of Thy life-giving sacraments!"

Often and again through the weary days did the mother's mind wander after her exiled son! Often and again did she pray the Lord to bring him home, and keep him true to his faith. How different now was life; what a vacancy was in the home despoiled of its fairest jewel!

And Patrick, where was he? He who was used to the comforts of a Christian home; he to whom life was opening up its golden gates of fortune; he, of noble stock, unused to menial labors; where was he? He had been transported to the farm of a prosperous pagan in the north of Ireland. As a common slave he mingled with slaves, he worked with slaves, he supped with slaves; day in and day out, he associated with heathens—heathens masters, heathen companions—the very animals and lands seemed to reek with heathenism. How often at first did his thoughts reach over the intervening seas to the lovely hearth in Normandy! Homesick and lonely he grieved for his sorrowing parents; disgusted and horrified he longed for his church and its pastors. But love, they say, will find a way, and love did find a way. Far from all churches of the Lord, Patrick had recourse to the temple of the Holy Ghost. He built himself a tabernacle within his own heart and there held communion with our Lord; and from there he drew strength and confidence. The charity of Christ kindled within him and inflamed a tender pity for the misguided souls around him. We can well imagine that for souls he offered his labors and privations; for them he offered his loneliness and exile, for them he asked his good God to accept the sorrows of his parents, for them he accepted the loss of Christian liberty. But the Lord demanded more of him, and he responded. Effecting his escape he worked his way to his native shores. What joy and gladness as he broke in upon his lonely mother! What life renewed to his aging father! The fatted calf was killed! All his friends and kindred rejoiced at his return. They never seemed to tire of asking of his strange adventures. And the earnestness and sympathy with which he expatiated on the pitiable condition of his captors added savor to his story.

But even amid these rejoicings, even before the first flush of welcome had worn off, Patrick was dreaming dreams. We can picture him alone, resting his chin on his hand and looking into space, thinking of the generous hearted, noble, Celtic souls, so ignorant of God. "We entreat thee, O holy youth, to come and walk still among us,"—such was the call ever ringing in his ears. Nor was he deaf to it. Scarcely were his parents well accustomed to his presence when he broke the news to them that he must return to his captors, return to his heathen friends in Ireland. Not this time as a bondsman, but to slave for their salvation. In vain did his relatives and friends remind him of the hardships and the trials, the difficulties and the dangers; in vain did they appeal to his love for his father and his mother to stay with them at home. "Back to Ireland I must go," he said; "it is God Himself who calls me."

Stories of his life tell us how, with zeal and energy, he began his long years of preparation for his future work, how he prepared for the priesthood, how he went to Rome and received from Pope Celestine

the mission and the right to instruct the Irish in the true faith, and how in the year 432 he landed once more on the shores of Erin. What a day in the annals of the Church! The beginnings of what a triumph! With what joy that day must have been celebrated in heaven, and with what fire and indignation in hell! How many legions of devils were gathered there to thwart his efforts—to keep this nation of apostles-to-be from the grace of God?

The oft-repeated tale of how quickly the seed of faith took root and how deeply it shot its roots, needs no retelling. Nor how the squalls and storms and hurricanes of persecution passed over the land and left the strong faith standing. And we all know how slips and shoots transplanted to other lands took root and flourished and spread until there was scarcely a country where the fruit of St. Patrick's labors could not be found.

Generally the Irish have been generous with their faith, they have passed it on, they have freely given of what they freely received. But what of us today? Many of us today, either directly or indirectly, owe our faith to the preaching of St. Patrick or his followers. Can we then, in our turn, keep this faith, so generously given and so dearly preserved, locked up in our own hearts? Can we, in our turn, be deaf to the call of our less fortunate brethren?

Today as fifteen hundred years ago, there are many souls ignorant of truth. They are only waiting to hear of Christianity in order to embrace it. And there is a dearth of messengers! The souls of pagans in far-off India are crying to us to come and teach them the truth, as St. Patrick taught our forefathers. Here is a practical way in which we can show if we are true followers of St. Patrick or merely his admirers. If more young men and women do not hear the cry of the heathen for help, it is because the noise of the busy world drowns in their souls the call of the apostle of Ireland.

The true and genuine progeny of this great apostle, if they are not themselves called to convert the heathen, can at least help the support of those that are. They can pray frequently and earnestly for the missionary and his works, and contribute to his support; they can ask the Lord to send more laborers to the vineyard; they can foster and encourage any sign of apostolic vocation in their children; they can be ready to surrender their boys or girls to the Lord if He should call them to His service. Do they often pray enough for the privilege of being the parent of another St. Patrick or another St. Bridget.—(Canadian Messenger.)

SOGGARTH AROON

"O soggarth aroon! Sure I know life is fleeting: Soon, soon in the strange earth my poor bones will lie:

I have said my last prayer and received my last blessing, And if the Lord's willing I'm ready to die."

But, soggarth aroon, can I never again see the valleys and hills of my dear native land?

When my soul takes its flight from this dark world of sorrow Will it pass through old Ireland to join the blest band?

"O soggarth aroon! sure I know that in heaven The loved ones are waiting and watching for me, And the Lord knows how anxious I am to be with them,

In those realms of joy 'mid souls pure and free, Yet, soggarth, I pray, ere you leave me forever, Relieve the last doubt of a poor dying soul.

Whose hope, next to God, is to know that when leaving 'Twill pass through old Ireland on the way to its goal.

"O soggarth aroon! I have kept through all changes The thrice blessed shamrock to lay o'er my clay."

And oh! it has minded me, often and often, Of that bright smiling valley so far, far away.

Then tell me, I pray you, will I ever again see, The place where it grew on my own native sod?

When my body lies cold in the land of the stranger, Will my soul pass through Erin on its way to our God?"

—DENIS O'SULLIVAN

IRELAND

Beside your bitter waters rise The Mystic Rose, the Holy tree, Immortal courage in your eyes, And pain and liberty.

The stricken arms, the cloven shields, The trampled plumes, the shattered drum, The swords of your lost battlefields To hopeless battles come.

And though your shattered remnants know Their shameful rout, their fallen kings, Yet shall the strong, victorious foe Not understand these things:

The broken ranks that never break, The merry road your rabble trod, The awful laughter they shall take Before the throne of God.

—THEODORE MAYNARD

There is but one view of things which is true, and that is God's view of them.

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