

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

REV. J. P. HICKY, O. S. B.
RESULTS OF A GOOD LIFE
"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed." (Matt. xiii. 31.)

This parable of the mustard seed, my dear brethren, was spoken by our Blessed Lord immediately after those of the sower and the cockle amongst the wheat. Those two parables teach us the difficulty of being good, and how few keep good. Only one-fourth of the hearers receive the Word of God; and even then, amongst the good seed, the enemy sows the cockle. Their lesson is one of discouragement; the lesson from the parable of the mustard seed, on the other hand, is one of encouragement—viz., from so small a beginning great results. "The least indeed of all seeds, but when it is grown up it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof." (ibid., 32.)

The truth of this parable stands every test, and it does us good to verify it. The remembrance of it has comforted many a humiliated heart, given courage, determination, and strength to many a wayfarer journeying to heaven.

For who is typified, in the first place, by the mustard seed? Christ our Lord. His birth, His life, His apparent failure in the world, the disaster, as even His disciples thought, of His death, were the seed. Contrast them with the redemption that He brought and the victory with which He has overcome the world! What Name is known, and adored, and recognized as King of earth and heaven but that once despised Name that was nailed to the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth"? The mustard seed grown into a tree.

And as the parable depicted Himself, so also is it true of His Spouse, the Holy Catholic Church. Born in the upper chamber in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, nursed in sorrow and suffering, exiled, hidden in the catacombs, stamped out, as the persecutors foolishly boasted, it lived through all, and grew and gathered strength, and when the days of peace dawned, it was found to have overspread the world.

But we can realize things of the days of our fathers and of the present, better and more readily than those of the distant past. As an example, then, of the growth of the Church take that of the United States of America. We know it now as the most enterprising and most pushing Christian nation in the world. Less than one hundred and twenty years ago their first Bishop was created by Pope Pius VI. Bishop Carroll was consecrated at Lulworth Castle, in the South of England—the mustard seed of the American Church. Before he died, in 1855, four more bishops had been added to Baltimore, and there were thirty priests for that vast continent. Watch the miraculous growth of the Holy Church. In thirty years more—that is, in 1885—there were twenty-one Bishops, and the thirty priests had become seven hundred. And in forty years after that, when Catholic America celebrated its centenary, in 1899—the one Bishop, of a hundred years ago, looked down from heaven upon the land, and beheld thirteen Archbishops, seventy-one Bishops, and eight thousand priests!

And who had chiefly peopled God's Church in the United States? The poor Irish emigrant and his children. The penal laws, the famine years, had depleted Ireland, but her people had gone forth, poor little seeds of the Faith, and had already grown up the noble tree with its spreading branches, the Church of Christ upon earth.

Do not remembrances such as these fill our souls with gratitude that we are children of the same Church? Do they not give us courage to face our duties and our work as Catholics? When prayer is distasteful, our heart unyielding, perseverance in a good life eluding our endeavours, we must not lose heart, but be determined to be faithful in little things. Remember, the kingdom of God is like to a grain of mustard seed. The holy men and women who have gone before us, who built up the Church of God, were only poor sinners like ourselves. They had passions, weaknesses, imperfections, jealousies, heart-burnings like ourselves; but they cherished the faith of God, and persevered in lowly service of prayer, of obedience to the laws of the Church, of respect and reverence for all that they had been taught to love and hold dear. And the result? Everlasting joy and glory with the angels of God in heaven.

It is so easy to forget in everyday life, to raise up our eyes and remember that we are meant for heaven. Look at the result, the issue of a good life, instead of bemoaning the burden we have to carry, the length of the journey, and the weariness of well-doing. Discouragement and repining take the heart out of any man's work. The parable of the mustard seed is one emphatically meant by our Blessed Lord to encourage us, to make us prize the gift of faith that he has bestowed on us, and to warm our hearts with the desire of imitating those who have gone before us.

The faith within us can transform our daily life. Offering all that we do each day to the honour of God, we are not working then long hours for a poor pittance. No; the work of our labour and our faith for God, and God is faithful to reward us. And in the constant endeavour of a holy, though hidden life, is it not a consolation to think of those who

have gone before us? Our surroundings may be all out of keeping with our hearts' intentions and desires. Neighbours, with no religion, could not understand us if they tried: they see nothing very different in our lives from their own; but God does. We are living for Him, aiming to please Him, longing to be faithful to Him. Our hearts are not here; they are with those who have gone before us, who persevered to the end, and who are now happy for ever with the Saints of God, as the blessed result of a good life.

VOCATIONS

It was the belief of the old-time pagans that among their honored gods and goddesses a certain number watched over the cradles of little children, directing them, from their earliest moments, towards adopting that particular calling in life for which each child was destined. We see in that pagan belief a resemblance to the teaching of our own religion, that each creature coming forth from the hand of God is destined to fill a special and definite place in the realm of creation, and that God's divine assistance is at the disposal of every creature towards carrying out His eternal plan.

To come down to the fundamental reason for our existence, we recall the lesson, given us in our earliest days, as to why we are in this world. Why did God create us? What is the chief, the one and only reason for our existence? The Catechism told us that. It taught us that "God made us to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next world." That is the "vocation," the calling of every one of us, without exception. We are all tending toward eternal happiness with God. If we fail to attain that end, our existence has been in vain. We have frustrated the plan of God; we have made all His works go for naught.

Human experience has shown us that all men do not follow the same road to their eternal destiny. As one, starting out on the journey of life, comes to the fork in the road, the path by which he is to travel, he finds himself confronted by a confusing choice of ways. He cannot, of course, elect more than one. And his choice, in the final analysis, will be one of two. The first is a broad, well-set and attractive road, winding in easy course towards eternity; this is the road of the common or ordinary life. The other is narrow, to the human eye less attractive, but leading more directly to its end; this is the road of the privileged or extraordinary life. Each of us has to choose between these two, for we are meant for either one of them. If we get on the wrong road, we are out of place. And our mistakes will cause ourselves alone; we are sure to interfere, in addition, with others who are following the same road on which we travel.

The selection of our path cannot be left to chance. We are not to be carried along on whatever route the winds of fortune may blow us. If, in its wildest sense, our vocation is to eternal life, so, in a special way may we be said to have received a calling to a particular path that will bring us there. God's hand is stretched forth to lead us along that particular route. If we yield to His guidance and follow it, we are following our vocation.

We have noted that God does not give anyone a vocation without giving him special help to follow it. If one, of his own initiative, strikes out on another path, he must go unaided. The help from on high that would have been his portion is withdrawn. He himself has forfeited it.

"What an impression of strength and power is conveyed by the locomotive as it rumbles swiftly round curves and over bridges, pulling after it heavy freight and precious human lives," says a writer on this subject. "But let the engine jump off the track and follow a road of its own choosing, and a lamentable wreck of tangled and twisted steel and iron will be seen. So it is with human lives. God is never sparing of happiness and prosperity, of love and beauty of soul, to those who, with their eyes constantly riveted upon His holy will, and their hand firmly grasping His Divine hand, are going along the path of their life."

Not so when passion, or ambition or the love of pleasure are the only guiding stars in the journey heavenward. These lights soon flicker and moan, and the followers are wretchedness and to themselves.

Through an erroneous notion, many have come to understand "vocation" to mean only a call to what we have termed the extraordinary, or privileged life—the life of the priesthood or the religious. In that sense we frequently hear the remark: "I feel that I have no vocation." But your vocation may be to live in the world, to pursue the ordinary Christian life. From the beginning God has clearly marked out this path for the greater number of His creatures. His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph were called to live in the world. For those who, like them, were to set up their own Nazareth, special help and supernatural assistance was provided. Not only was such a life sanctioned from on high but the Son of God, at the marriage at Cana, clothed it with the mantle of sacramental dignity.

No argument is needed to show that life in the world is not incompatible with attaining eternal salvation. We have countless examples of souls who have not only not failed

to work out their destiny in married life, but have attained to marked sanctity in doing so. St. Anne, St. Joachim, St. Monica, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, are only a few of the many models held up to us by the Church. We are nowhere taught that to be virtuous, one must leave the world and enter the priesthood or the convent. For many, it would be an egregious mistake to do so. There is always great need of thoroughly virtuous people who, in the world, will establish and maintain model Christian families. Those intended by God to follow such a life would fail in their vocation, were they to adopt any other.

We read of a Monsieur Dupont, known in the town of Tours, France, where a century ago he lived, as "the saint." His friends urged him to take up the life of the priesthood. "I shall pray that God may enlighten me as to His will" was his answer. After due reflection, accompanied by prayer, he confessed to his friends: "In vain have I prayed. I feel no inclination whatsoever towards the priesthood or the religious life. It is my vocation to remain in the world and there to serve God and work for the salvation of souls." And he remained a layman, of exemplary and holy life.

There are some, however, who are called by God to lead an extraordinary life. Their vocation is the more sublime, and aims directly at that self-denial and Christian perfection of which the Son of God Himself is the model. One who is called to leave the world and follow Christ is expected to reproduce in himself, or herself, those virtues with which the life of Christ was so replete. Therefore is a priest or a religious referred to as another Christ. And if it be argued that there have been individuals who have entered into this extraordinary life without the manifest vocation to it, it is conversely just as sadly true that many have suspected the call, or heard it whispered in their own hearts, and have failed to give it heed.

The means by which God manifests His Divine will towards His creatures are many and different. Not all are shown their vocation as clearly as was St. Peter, who was clearly called: "Come, follow Me!" or St. Paul, who was struck down and blinded on the road to Damascus.

Ordinary souls must expect that Divine Providence will use ordinary means in showing and developing their vocations. How these means may be recognized is of the next importance.—Catholic Transcript.

A HEROINE OF THE WAR

HOW A GIRL BOOKKEEPER WON THE CROSS OF HONOR

The most signal honor France can bestow has been conferred upon little Marcelle Semmer for her heroism in the War. Long ago, as far back as the first retreat to the Marne, she won the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and since that time her gallantry has been such that she has been acclaimed in the great hall of the Sorbonne at Paris. It is here that France gave honors to the great men of the world, poets, philosophers and scientists in times of peace, and as we read the account of Mlle. Semmer's deeds as set forth in the New York Times, it must be agreed that she was worthy of the honor.

The orator of the occasion, Mr. Klotz, from the department of the Somme, began his address by an eulogy of the obscure and unnumbered heroines of the War, the mothers who sent their sons to the front, the women in the occupied districts who never lost faith in the ultimate return of the French. Then he recounted the service which Marcelle Semmer, only twenty-one, had performed:

The outbreak of the War found her an orphan girl in the little village of Ecluseur, near Frise, on the Somme. There she was a bookkeeper and superintendent of a phosphate factory founded by her father, an Alsatian who had fled from Alsace in 1871, not wishing to become a German subject. After the defeat of the Allies at Charleroi the French tried to make a stand along the Somme, but being outnumbered by the huge forces of the invaders, they fell back across a canal in the vicinity of Marcelle Semmer's home, with the enemy in hot pursuit. When the retreating Frenchmen had got across the canal, Marcelle Semmer, in the presence of mind to raise the drawbridge over the canal. Then, fearing that the German advance guard, now close behind, might swim across the canal and seize from her the key, without which the drawbridge could not be lowered again, she threw it into the canal. She was in the nick of time. Already German soldiers on the other bank were firing across at her and the fleeing Frenchmen.

By this audacious act Marcelle Semmer held up the advance of an entire German army corps until the following morning. Not until then were they able to collect some boats, make a pontoon bridge and negotiate the passage of the canal, thus giving away golden hours to the hard-pressed French troops.

In spite of all the risks, the young girl insisted on remaining in her village during the German occupation. In a subterranean passage used in the working of a phosphate mine near Ecluseur, the brave Marcelle managed to conceal no less than sixteen French soldiers who had strayed from their commands in the precipitate retreat from Charleroi and Mons.

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She not only kept these men hidden, but fed them, provided them with civilian garments, and, when a propitious moment arrived, aided them to escape into the French lines.

While she was helping a seven-teenth she was caught by a detachment of Germans, who dragged her and the French soldier before the local commander. When asked whether she had indeed meant to help the soldier to escape she cried out:

"Yes! And he is not the first. I helped sixteen others and I got them where you cannot catch them. Do what you will with me now. I am an orphan and have but one mother—France! I am not afraid to die."

She was sentenced to be shot. They took her from the courtroom and placed her before the firing squad, but while the girl had been helping seventeen soldiers to escape, the battle of the Marne had been fought and won and the French were now rapidly advancing. At the moment when her death seemed only a moment away the French artillery opened fire on the town and the German positions around Ecluseur. The cannonade was so sudden that the firing squad was disbanded, and in the confusion Marcelle was able to escape to her subterranean gallery.

Shortly after the French reoccupied Ecluseur. The Times goes on to say: "Between the lines of the opposing armies lay the Somme, which in the vicinity of Ecluseur and Frise spreads out into a sort of big pond with marshy banks. When the water rose it often flooded the lines so that soldiers frequently lost their way, and here it was that Marcelle again found a means of aiding France. Being thoroughly acquainted with the neighborhood, she used to pilot parties of soldiers. This brought her again close to death. While leading a squad of men who wanted to dig an advanced trench in the village of Frise she fell into the hands of a party of Germans.

"They locked her up in the little village church of Frise, reduced last too feebly to travel to a safer place, the battle of the Somme. On the morning, she felt sure, they would shoot her."

But once more luck and the French artillery were her salvation. The French across the Somme began a lively bombardment of Frise. One shell blew a large hole in the church wall. Through this hole, unperceived by her captors, Marcelle crept. Creeping past the Germans scattered through Frise, she soon tumbled, safe and sound, into the nearest French trench.

By this time her fame had spread and rewards began to shower upon her. She got the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and some time later the Croix de Guerre. She was made a Knight of the Legion of Honor. Marcelle looked out for her night and day with unflinching devotion. Everywhere soldiers knew and admired her. One English general ordered his soldiers to salute when she passed and refrain from addressing her unless she spoke first.

At last, however, the strain of bombardment and work aided by her grief at the death of her soldier brother and brother-in-law, proved too much for her strength and she was persuaded to go to Paris. Yet she had no intention of stopping her efforts. She petitioned the authorities to allow her to enter a nurses' school in order that she might continue to aid the wounded. She added that it was necessary for her to work, as everything she possessed had been lost in the War. Her request was granted. The Times adds:

All this Mr. Klotz told his audience at the Sorbonne. Then suddenly he stretched out his hand in dramatic gesture and electrified his auditors with these words:

"This little heroine of Picardy, this admirable girl, this incarnation of the qualities of the woman of France, this girl of simple origin, flawless dignity, of serious mind and gentle ways, this girl of indomitable will power, is here, ladies and gentlemen, here among you, in this room! And I fear that I, the spokesman for every one of you when I now extend to her the expression of our respect, our gratitude, our admiration!"

The auditors, every man, woman and child of them, leaped to their feet, mad with enthusiasm. They craned their necks to catch a glimpse of the heroine. Unable to escape them, the young girl stood up, blushing. Through the great hall of the Sorbonne, where the most famous people of the world had been honored by France, swept a storm of cheers. A reward more splendid than the Cross of the Legion of Honor, than the War Cross, than the salutes of soldiers at the front, had come to Marcelle Semmer.—St. Paul Bulletin.

WHEN THE SIXTY-NINTH COMES BACK

The Sixty-ninth is on its way—France heard it long ago, And the Germans knew we're coming, to give them blow for blow.

We've taken on the contract, and when the job is through We'll let them hear a Yankee cheer and an Irish ballad, too.

"The Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls" shall fill the air with song, And the Shamrock be cheered as the port is neared by our triumph and throng, With the Potsdam Palace on a truck and the Kaiser in a sack, New York will be seen one Irish Green when the Sixty-ninth comes back.

We brought back from the border our flag—it was never lost; We left behind the land we love, the stormy sea we crossed.

We heard the cry of Belgium, and France the free and fair; For where there's work for fighting-men, the Sixty-ninth is there.

The men who fought at Marye's Heights will aid us from the sky. They showed the world at Fredericksburg how Irish soldiers die.

At Blackburn Ford they think of us, Atlanta and Bull Run, There are many silver rings on the old dagblat, but there's room for another one.

God rest our valiant leaders dead, whom we cannot forget; They'll see the Fighting Irish and the Fighting Irish yet.

While Ryan, Roe and Corcoran on history's pages shine, A wreath of laurel and shamrock waits the head of Colonel Hine.

"The Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls" shall fill the air with song, And the Shamrock be cheered as the port is neared by our triumph and throng.

With Potsdam Palace on a truck and the Kaiser in a sack, New York will be seen one Irish Green when the Sixty-ninth comes back.

—JOYCE KILMER

VICTORY LOAN NECESSARY WHETHER PEACE COMES OR NOT

Don't let the German peace propaganda interfere with the success of the Victory Loan.

Canada's war expenditure to-day is greater than ever before. There are 75,000 more Canadian overseas than there were a year ago. They are still going over as fast as Canada can send them.

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