

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

REV. F. P. HICKEY, O. S. B. SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE CHURCH CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC

"Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark xvi. 15.)

No better known word exists, my dear brethren, than "Catholic." The spelling may vary a little, but its sound and look are unmistakable in many languages. Like the word itself, so the Church, that bears that name, is unmistakable. It is universal, as the word Catholic signifies, it is found everywhere, it has worked its way throughout the whole world. Im-

mations there are and there have been, but they deceive none except those who are willing to be deceived. The genuine Catholic Church is recognized by the whole world. Its enemies even, however bitterly they may hate it, certainly cannot ignore it.

From the lips of its Divine Founder the Church received the commission to be Catholic. "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." And it has been faithful to that commission ever since. It is marvellous to follow the journeyings of the Apostles. Filled with the Holy Spirit they hastened to carry the good tidings throughout the world. "Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." (Ps. xviii. 5.) The men, who covered together for fear of the Jews, when filled with the Holy Spirit and commissioned to preach, traversed the known world of those days, founded sees in every country, and laid down their lives in various lands.

And their successors followed and ruled the world from the Catacombs. Ten persecutions raged against the Church, and yet within fourteen years from the last persecution, when the Emperor Constantine had given liberty to the Church, in the year 325, how many Bishops could assemble at the First General Council? Three hundred and eighty. How amazed the world must have been! This the Religion that had been stamped out? The Council was convened at Nice in Bithynia, and see what a Catholic assemblage of Prelates met there. Pope Sylvester sent representatives from Rome, Bishop Hosius of Cordova in Spain presided, Caecilian came from Carthage, in Africa, from Gaul the Bishop of Dijon, Antioch and Asia Minor and Italy sent many, and from Alexandria in Egypt came Bishop Alexander and with him the greatest of them all, the young Athanasius. Thus the three hundred and eighteen Bishops, from all parts of the world, gathered together to proclaim their Founder Divine, and to prove that His Church was Catholic.

It is a long, long look back, through the vista of ages from 1900 to the First General Council, A.D. 325. But throughout those ages the Church has been ever spreading, making itself Catholic and more Catholic as time went on. True there have been storms and hurricanes that have tried it, but, like some noble tree, a giant of the forest, though branches have been torn from its trunk, it is still alive, the same old tree, flourishing and throwing out new branches, and its roots spreading, claiming fresh ground each year. And in our own day, there are Bishops in communion with Rome, and holding their powers from the Pope, in every land upon which God's sun shines down. And under these Bishops, priests, and all these priests believing the same truth, preaching the same doctrine, saying the same Mass, administering the same Sacraments, Catholic in every way is the holy Church of Christ.

"Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." They to whom these words were spoken were the Apostles, and they were told to preach the Gospel. My dear brethren, the Gospels had not been written then. What they had to preach was not the written Gospel, but the good tidings of the Redemption of Christ. And how had they this knowledge? From the Holy Ghost, of whom Christ had said, "He will teach you all truth" (John xiv. 13), and "He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you." (John xiv. 26.) And when the apostles added fresh preachers to themselves, as Barnabas and Timothy and others, these learned the word from the Apostles, and so began Tradition. Tradition, the handing down the teaching of Christ by word of mouth, by teaching and preaching. Clinging to this tradition makes the Church Apostolic. What other Church, save the one, can claim this privilege, this mark of authenticity. We can trace back the history and origin of every sect and church, and their antiquity is wanting, for we find their author long subsequent to the time of the Apostles. And we find their author is a man, and not the Divine Founder of the Catholic Church, Jesus Christ our Lord.

So we children of the true Church see the importance of holding fast to the teaching and the traditions of the Apostles. What does St. Paul say? "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema." (Gal. i. 8.) And see him, as St. Luke tells us, "confirming the Churches, commanding them to keep the precepts of the Apostles and the ancients." (Acts xv. 41.) From the beginning there have been proud and self-sufficient men who have started doctrines and ideas of their own.

They did not escape St. Paul's notice; he says, "There are some who trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." (Gal. i. 7.) But their errors have never prevailed except locally and for a time.

In these days of indifference, when one is called a bigot, unless he admits that one Church is as good as another, when believing what one likes, and nothing hard and fast, is mistaken for charity and large-mindedness, we cannot be too strict in holding fast in every point to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. "Therefore, Brethren, stand fast; and hold the traditions which you have learned." (2 Thess. ii. 14.) Let us rally to these strong and stirring words of St. Paul. Pray for earnest faith. Be on your guard against vain words and insidious sneers. Reverence every tradition and teaching of the Church. Remember that by your life you can honour or dishonour the Divine Founder of the Catholic and Apostolic Church.

TEMPERANCE

A DANGEROUS SNAKE

Some time ago I read an anecdote which amply illustrates the action of drink. The head of a zoological garden had in his collection of reptiles one which was rare and poisonous.

One day, in talking of this reptile to some visitors, he opened the cage where it was kept and by the usual method picked it up, grasping it just back of the head so that so far as its bite was concerned, it was perfectly harmless. Turning to his visitors, he said: "When I get through telling you the history of this snake, all I have to do is simply to cast it into its cage." Then he proceeded to tell them where the snake was obtained, its supposed age, and the length of time a person would live if bitten by it. During this time the reptile was coiling its body around his forearm shutting off the circulation and weakening the muscles until, while he was still talking, his grip relaxed, the serpent's head was released from his grasp, and he was bitten again and again.

This man did not realize that the coils of the reptile's body around the arm would gradually weaken the muscles so that ultimately he would be unable to maintain his power over it and would soon or late be at its mercy. And although the drinking man at the start has the power to quit and is profuse in his assertions that when he finds it harming him he will give up its use, he does not at that time realize that through the cultivation of a craving for itself, its numbing of sensation, its impairment of intellect, its blunting of perception, and its weakening of will power, it will rob him of all those things which give him his normal power of resistance. In other words, as the appetite for it increases, his resistance to it decreases, and the time comes, in a large number of cases, when it is next to an impossibility for him to discontinue its use without the aid of a thorough course of treatment.

Let me further say that the time has come when our profession should drop the time-worn antiquated idea that the victims of drink are chiefly found among degenerates, perverts, etc. Temperament has much to do with the rapidity and the certainty with which alcohol overcomes the individual, and the man of quick, nervous temperament is the one that responds most quickly to the quieting, soothing effects of alcohol, and, therefore, such a one succumbs to its enthralling influence much more quickly than the man of lymphatic temperament. — Charles L. Hamilton, M. D., in the Catholic Temperance Advocate.

HIGH MASS

All Catholics worthy of the name assist at Mass at least once a week. It is the direct command of Almighty God, no less than a precept of the Church, that one day out of seven should be sanctified and set apart for sacred service. The faithful in general obey the precept of their religion prescribing attendance at Mass, though this in itself is only the minimum required under the pain of mortal sin.

In the ceremonial of the Church, elaborate and detailed rubrics are prescribed for the reverent and solemn celebration of the world's great act of worship. These rubrics are of great antiquity and were primarily intended for the celebration of the sacrifice in which many of the parts were sung. Hence the Mass is best understood when it is a High Mass. In itself it is a great liturgical action, with a beginning, a middle and an end, and all these parts are intended to stand out with significance and impressiveness, in the remarkable ceremonial which has been built up around the great act of the Consecration of the Body and Blood of our Lord. The Low Mass came later. While there were many excellent reasons for its introduction the fact remains that the idea of the Church is better carried out in the celebration of what we know as the High Mass.

It is deplorable that a preference for what is known as the Low Mass has become so noticeable among the Catholics of our time. To be generous in God's service means more than to assist at the shortest Mass we can find, and that but once a week. There is a mine of religious instruction simply in the ceremonies of the Church, and when these are followed intelligently, not only does

there come to minds a better appreciation of the Holy Sacrifice, but also into hearts a deeper love for the mystery of the Mass and more sincere gratitude for the graces purchased by Christ's redemptive death, perpetuated to us in His immolation on the altar.—Providence Visitor.

CARDINAL MERCIER

[Laura Simmons, in the New York Tribune, pays the following poetic tribute to Cardinal Mercier, who has become prominent through his efforts to keep his flock together in Belgium.]

It was but yesterday he walked in humble tranquil ways— A happy shepherd with his flock, and peace upon his face.

To-day—a stern defiant form limned on a fiery cloud— His altars stripped and desolate, his children terror-bowed.

Despair and famine in the land—his brethren maimed and slain; (Vicar, behold—thy sinless Lord is crucified again!)

Still do the stricken turn to him in trust and love; and he, Who shared their joys, now treads with them their dark Gethsemane.

O'holy champion of right, in days of woeful wrong! His burning heart, 'neath priestly garb, a People's bulwark strong!

Through Christendom that dauntless voice of tragic protest rings— Above the selfish schemes of state, or petty strife of kings;

A frail, black-robed archangel—Lo, he guards the ravaged way; "Our vengeance is with God alone; beware—He will repay!"

Behind the flaming sword atides God's promise, grim and sure; "His strength shall be the strength of ten, whose cause is just and pure."

WONDERFUL FAITH OF THE CATHOLIC SOLDIER

"FRENCH WINDOWS" OPENING ON THE BATTLEFIELD

(By "M. C. L." in Edinburgh Herald)

It has been said that some persons seem to carry stamped on their retina an image that bids out the actual thing before them; there are those whose eyes are so filled with ideals of goodness and purity that whenever they look at man or woman they see virtue reflected back to them, whilst the eyes of others, say, of venomous Orangemen or No Popery fanatics, are so filled with evil that they see only what is vile reflected back to them from purity itself. There are persons who can draw out the best in others, who inspire faith and hope, reverence and love, unconsciously revealing what they themselves are by their treatment and estimate of their fellow-creatures; and one finds an inspiring revelation of character in "John Ayscough's book on the War, "French Windows." He beholds in others what is noble, lovable, exalted, holy and opening windows into his own soul reveals to us a sanctuary; in telling us of the faith of the Catholic soldier he tells us of his own, absolute, unquestioning, exalted. Little wonder that a non-Catholic surgeon who was associated with him "somewhere in France" should have written that he honoured the Church which produced such a man. "John Ayscough" is the penname of the Colonel-Priest, Mgr. Bickerstaffe Drew, and "French Windows" is a series of sketches of personal experiences of the War, now piercing in pathos, now relieved with quiet humour, now giving us a glimpse of a convent, now of a village-home after the Huns had finished with it. Needless to say, "the Ancient," as the author styles himself, writes of Catholic nuns as they are, not as malice misrepresents them, and fair would have them be. He tells us something of the effect which personal contact with these ladies had upon Protestant "Tommy" how the Franciscan Sisters at an old French town handed over the new part of their Hospice for Aged men and Women for the wounded soldiers, undertaking to nurse them, in addition to taking care of their regular charges who occupied an older but "quite modern and excellent" wing of the building; whilst the Sisters inhabited the worst part. "They were all excellent, but their Superioress was a quite remarkable person, capable, ever-ready, and a first-rate organizer. She was a trained anesthetist, and almost nightly would be at work in the operating theatre till it was night no longer, and then would take a very brief sleep; she was always in chapel in her place when the Ancient went to say Mass there at half-past six or seven." It was to her that Queen Alexandra sent a gracious letter of thanks for the care bestowed upon the wounded British soldiers. "Those Masses in the hospice chapel one will not easily forget. There were the nuns, most of whom had been at work half and more than half the night, and all the long day before; some of whom were too old for any work, and crept slowly to their places. . . . There were good folk from the town, almost all in deep mourning." And nearly always before the altar was a soldier's coffin, sometimes two or three, sometimes half-a-dozen, draped with the

flag of France for which those silent heroes, soon to be laid to rest, had died. The English Protestant soldier who went one morning to hear that Mass, and looked with pity and respect at the bent figures of fathers come to pray for their dead sons, and at the veiled circle of nuns and heard the music, which was a cry to Christ, said that he had never seen 'cut' like that. He went round the whole of the hospital and was impressed by the comfort, the exquisite cleanliness, the perfect peace and stillness of the lofty, airy wards.

"It was abundantly clear on what a kindly and sympathetic footing the nuns were with their soldier patients; and what especially touched the young Englishman was that the lady who helped the Sisters as *branch-cardiers* in the wards were ecclesiastical students, who had had to lay aside for a while their treatises to read in this great book of charity." On another occasion "the Ancient" and his unit were billeted in a school, and sat down to supper at desks of an acute angle. "But in the village was a convent, and in the convent were nuns, and the birds of the air were carried the matter. The nuns were greatly scandalized to hear talk of grates lapping up soup out of precipitous soup-plates in school rooms, and a deputation came to see. 'Ma Soeur' saw, and was more deeply shocked than ever. 'This,' she said, as though quelling a revolution, 'must cease.' The convent was very big—"nearly a tenth of the size of the smallest nun's heart," and "all of us were ordered there, soldiers and all. . . . And as the days went on it was easy to see that the Sisters of Charity"—(to whom the Commanding Officer referred as "these holy ladies"—"were not less contented with their military guests than were their guests with their open-hearted welcome." "The Ancient" did much in the way of distributing crucifixes and medals, "mostly medals of God's great mother, and he could but trust that they who claimed them might be reminded of her sky-clean mantle and be drawn under its protection. The least effect must be to each of these soldiers, caught in the great tangle of the great War, that he should remember the more clearly the double Motherhood stooping over him, hers in Heaven who is its Queen, and hers on earth whom the Virgin Christ calls His bride and spouse." A Presbyterian soldier, who asked for a crucifix, said that he had seen a whole village smashed and a whole church by the German shells, but the great Crucifix stood untouched, the Figure with arms outstretched, the Face turned up as though asking his Father's mercy on men. Occasionally non-Catholic officers helped in the distribution, and when one from "the black North" complained that his assistance had not been asked, "the Ancient" bantered him about giving "Popish gear to Papists," to which the young man answered: "Don't! I am learning things." So has it been with many. And surely any who witnessed the administration of the last Sacraments to dying Catholic soldiers, French, Belgian, Pole, Ally and foeman alike, must have learned something of the unity of the Faith. "I wonder how many times during the War it came in upon one what a wonderful, great thing the Catholic Church is," says the author, and even those not of her Fold must have at least faintly discerned it. The comment is made in connection with experiences in a village where at first the people had supposed "the Ancient" to be a Protestant pastor, and had respected his age and his calling, but when they found that he was a Catholic priest, "there was a sort of intimacy and relationship in their smiling encouragement." They were all members of the one great family. "A Catholic like us!" How many barriers go down before those words! And how true are the author's words that in the Catholic Church there is a certain thing, which he calls a quality, that arrests every open-eyed man who scans her. "You have come to see it," he told certain of his associates on the way to visit a monastery, "since you have been forced to look at her here in France. It is that quality that preaches louder than any preacher in any pulpit. . . . Polemics, controversy, special pleading, would simply bore you and set all your opposition alert on guard. But that quality arrests you, and because it is a fact, patent in itself, it impresses you more than any assertion of it could. That quality is one of the heirlooms of the Catholic Church, bequeathed to her by her own children, and lives, like those of these monks, maintain its store, and add to it in every age." We cannot read this book without longing that our lives might add a little to that store, that never through word or deed of ours should the name of Catholic be tarnished nor that fine "quality" be lessened. Nor can we read it without a sense of humble gratitude to God that we belong to His Church and claim as our kindred in Christ the saintly souls "through which He shows the Light."

Our Lady was not only admirable in her outward form and inward beauty, or in great heroic deeds, but also in her daily life which was ordered and regulated by the law of God and love of her neighbor. Live, as it were, on trust. All that is in you, all that you are, is only loaned to you. Make use of it according to the will of Him Who lends it; but never regard it for a moment as your own.—Fenelon.

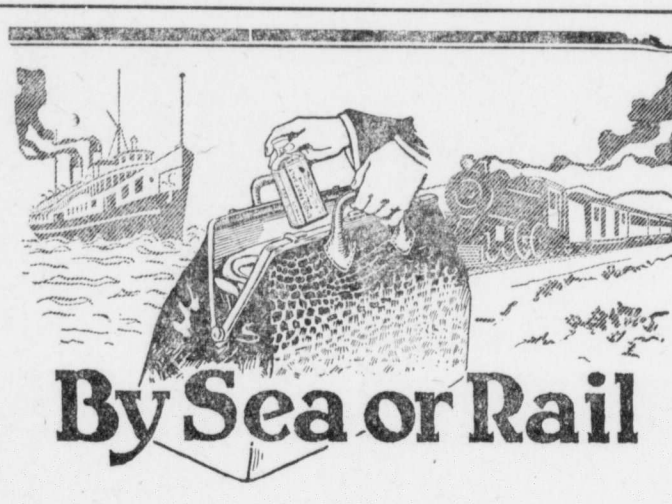


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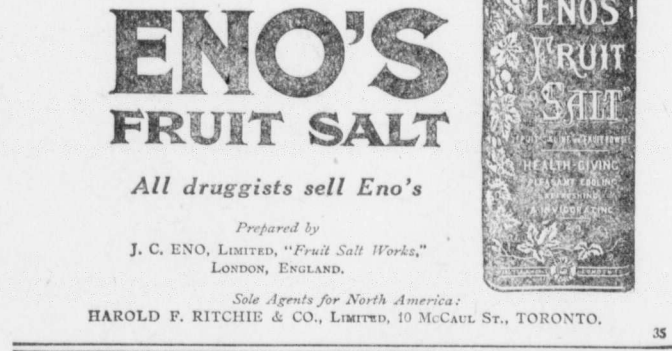
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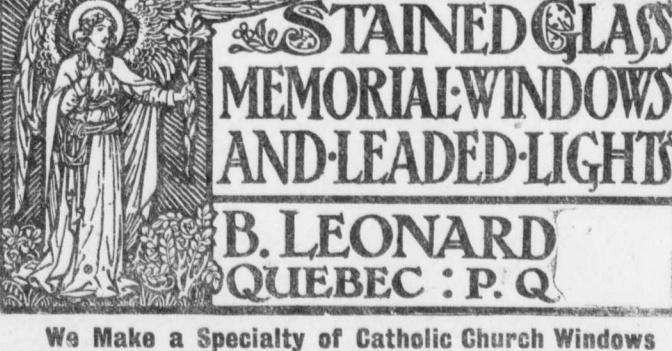
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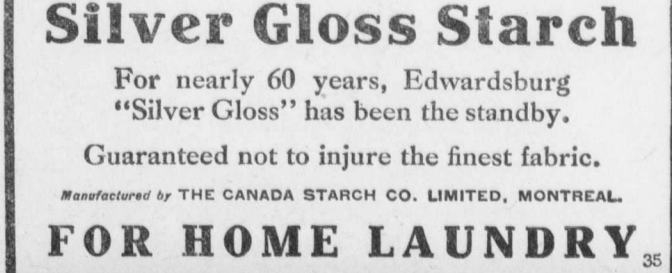
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