

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. N. M. REDMOND
SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

OBLIGATION TO HEAR GOD'S WORD

"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God." (1. Luke viii. 2.)

At the bottom of that spiritual sloth and the other serious transgressions which have to be deplored in some members of every parish, is that often displayed disinclination to hear and profit by the word of God in sermons and instructions. They seem to be oblivious or ignorant of the strict obligation which devolves upon them, to religiously fulfill this very sacred part of their Christian duty. They should understand that the best authority strongly urges that studied and unwarranted breaches of this sacred duty, should particularly enter into their preparation for sacramental grace. So long as this duty is without cause neglected, the sacred days of the Lord are never, as the precept demands, sanctified. The command of Christ to His Apostles and their successors "to go and teach the people of all nations, to observe whatsoever He hath commanded them," evidently implies the obligation of the people to hear and profit by the word which they preach. The silly sophistry which sometimes the devil suggests to justify their violation of this obligation, is nothing to the purpose. If the Priest has an obligation to preach, and he has, the people have an obligation to hear and profit by the word which he preaches. Our Lord distinctly says to His priests: "He that hears you hears Me." No Christian will deny that he is obliged to hear our blessed Lord. But when do those hear Him, who are to be found in every parish noted for shirking the sermon or instruction? Not surely at the rostrums of fanatics and itinerant stumpers, to hear whom they display such great propensity. Apart from this evident breach of duty, would be well for them not to forget, whenever they take the thought to straighten their accounts with God, that their positive sin of scandal has been doing great mischief in others. Whilst the priest represents Christ and sows the seed of His word, they allow themselves to be used by the devil, to sow the seed of scandal. Take warning in time; this is an abuse of one of heaven's best gifts. You know not to what sermon or instruction the grace of your salvation may be attached.

Let the intellectual or virtuous merit of the deliverer be what it may, the word of God is always the same. Marvellous have been the changes which it has wrought in the history of the world. Coming from the lips of obscure, illiterate fishermen, it razed from its foundation the pagan structure which filled the Gentile world. The evil genius, the wealth, the power of a corrupt world failed most disastrously to stay its mighty influence. Dropped in the hearts of the people from the simplest tongues, it set the whole man on fire with the torch from on high "consuming the vapors of sin, drying up the marshes of vice, and killing the deep roots of bad habits." Of the most notorious sinners, it has made the most glorious saints. Millions have it led from the high ways of hell to crowns in heaven. Hearts the most hardened it has softened; minds the most proud and inflexible it has humbled and bent; darkness the most dense it has dispersed; and souls the most barren it has made fertile. Only God could tell the marvels of His word on earth. Dire may be the difficulties before the sower; he should never, however, despair of good results—"it is God who gives the increase." Though he never can look for a full yield for his labors, few there are in any congregation whom his labors will not avail. The fruit may not be forthcoming, but impressions are not always quickly lost.

The intelligent Catholic spoke the truth, when he said: "I never yet heard a sermon, no matter how poorly delivered, in which I could not find much that I could apply with great fruit to myself." What a blessing for all who hear sermons, if they would realize the same! Then conversations would fruitfully run on what was said, rather than uncharitably on the peculiarities of the speaker; then the most happy results would be produced in every soul. But, alas, how often is it quite otherwise! People there are in every congregation, who have a peculiar aptitude for applying what ever is said to their neighbors, without once taking an idea home to themselves. They are well versed in their neighbors' shortcomings, but sadly ignorant of their own. It is easy to understand that they are of the number that profit not by sermons. They hear, but they hear amiss, and therefore are not of God." He that is of God heareth God's word," and how often is it to himself. The hearing of the word of God without applying it to himself will avail a man as little, as it did the Jews and Pharisees, who heard it from the lips of our blessed Lord. Nor will his loss stop with this, since he is guilty of abusing one of the greatest means which our Lord has given for the conversion of the world. See in this, O Christians, who hear and heed not, your continued abuse of one of God's best gifts to man! What a strict account you will be obliged to give for all those sermons which you have heard without profit to your soul! Then will you be upbraided, as were the cities of old, "that had even the most abandoned sinners heard the

things that you have heard, they would have become Saints of God's heavenly kingdom rather than victims of His eternal vengeance." Forget not, dear people, the strict obligation which devolves upon you to hear God's word in sermons and instructions. Remember that it is an essential part of the sanctification of the Lord's day. Take home, every one to himself, what is said, and let him put it into his daily life. It is only thus he will fulfill his obligation, for "Not the hearers, but the doers and observers of God's word are justified in His sight."

TEMPERANCE

TRAIN TO SOBRIETY

In many places the preventive and remedy of total abstinence societies was never tried, or failed through indifference or opposition. In districts where now the sentiment for prohibition is strong, it was sometimes the shameful boast that a total abstinence society could not exist. There saloons flourished; scores of boys and young men, each year, crossed the threshold of the saloon to enter on the way to rowdism, drunkenness, and crime; Catholics were a large percentage of juvenile delinquents and of adult criminals; the saloon prospered, the temperance society was hanned or barely tolerated.

Not the frequent advocacy of total abstinence in the churches and schools of these strongholds of alcohol, but the failure of churches and schools to inculcate the discipline of total abstinence, is one of the chief influences for the advance of prohibition. Today there are parishioners who must make a pilgrimage to a neighboring parish to hear a temperance sermon or to have their children pledged against drink. There are parishes notorious for drunkenness, where saloons and drinking clubs flourish, and in some of those places generations of children grow up without being instructed, pledged, or fortified in any way against the dangers of drink and drinking places. Had the total abstinence movement, which has the approval of Popes and of the hierarchy of the United States been encouraged and earnestly promoted, there would be no need to turn to the State for help to suppress intemperance among Catholics. Had the decrees of the Councils of Baltimore been respected and obeyed, the appeal to prohibitory legislation to protect the home would not be so urgent as it is. In few parishes where total abstinence principles and societies have been ardently propagated has there been any marked trend towards prohibitory legislation. When boys and girls are not trained to sobriety, by word and example, in their parishes, the people will sooner or later invoke the law to suppress the enticements, occasions and scandals of intemperance.—Catholic Temperance Advocate.

THE MYSTERY OF THE TWO HOUSES

Archbishop Ireland often tells the following story: I was strolling of a summer evening along one of the streets in the upper part of St. Paul. I recognized a friend hammering a piece of wood in front of a new and neatly built cottage. I approached with the salute.

"Well, Patrick, what are you doing here?"

"Industrious," answered he; "putting some last touches to this house of mine."

"This house of yours," I replied. "Have you had the money to pay for this fine building?"

"Yes, indeed," he answered; "this house is paid for, and so is the next one, mine also—one to live in, and the other to be rented out to some neighbor."

"Why, how is this, Patrick? I remember well when you had very little money."

"So do I remember," replied Patrick. "But I have found the money. You, Father Ireland, gave it to me."

Still more did my wonder grow.

"Come inside," continued Patrick; and in an instant, following his quick pace, I was upstairs in Patrick's bedroom. "Look here," he said, "here is the deed of gift."

I looked. On the wall above the bed, nicely framed, was the document. "I promise to abstain during my lifetime from all intoxicating drinks. Signed, Patrick O— Witnessed, John Ireland."

The mystery of the two houses, the property of Patrick, was explained.—Catholic Monthly.

A REMEDY FOR A DIVIDED CHRISTIANITY

One of the ablest of the Anglican divines, the Bishop of Chester, has been delivering a pungent and striking discourse at the parish church, Leeds, on "A Divided Christianity," says the Liverpool Times: He pointed out that while in 1869 there were no less than 100 religious denominations in England duly registered, at the present moment there are as many as 254 on the roll. This fact, he said, was no less significant than alarming. If things go on at this rate nearly every non-Catholic in England will be practically his own Church, high priest and theologian before the end of the nineteenth century. Events are shaping that way, and it should be noted that these 254 religions by no means represent all the diversities of

religious beliefs. There are tens of thousands of people in England—and these not the more ignorant residuum—who do not bother their heads about any of these registered religions. They allow themselves as a rule to be catalogued generally as Protestants, but they really do not protest against any Christian or even Pagan doctrine. They simply ignore them. What is the remedy suggested by the Bishop for this significant and alarming state of Christian England? It appears it lies in "holding fast to the true theory of the Church." But, to which sect within that great national sect—the Church of England—did his Lordship wish his auditors to adhere? The Ritualists, Evangelicals and Broad Churchman are, though nominally united, really as much separated as—say the Baptists. Independents and Methodists.—Our Sunday Visitor.

"GO FORTH AND TEACH ALL NATIONS"

By Benjamin F. Bowling, in "The Mountaineer"

From the dawn of Christianity, down through all the centuries of the present day, how faithfully has the Church carried out the instruction of her Divine Founder, "Go forth and teach all nations!" Over nineteen hundred years ago, the little band of Apostles set out at the command of their Master to convert a whole heathen world. Behold them racked and tortured at the hands of the Roman emperors! Willingly, joyfully, they suffered receiving their crowns of martyrdom with a smile of joy upon their faces, trusting that by their death some soul at least would be rescued from the darkness and error of Paganism. Thousands upon thousands of holy saints and martyrs sacrificed their lives for the propagation of the Faith in that infant stage of the Church's history. The memory of those glorious days, when, under ten pagan emperors, the Roman forum was deluged with the blood of Christian men and women, will live forever. In those days of persecution, the faith of all succeeding ages hung trembling in the balance. Surrounded by ignorance, infidelity and pagan cruelty, the tiny spark of Catholicity, kindled by the little band of Apostles, seemed doomed to utter extinction. But this was not to be. That same Master, who inspired the martyrs with their undying heroism, had decreed it otherwise. That little flame of Christianity, enkindled and fanned by the noble works and missions of those ardent Christians, began to grow brighter and brighter, and slowly, the light of Faith began to dawn upon a pagan nation.

Nothing could stop those early missionaries of the Cross. They penetrated into all countries. Want and privation failed to daunt them; torture had for them no terror, dangers and the sight of death served only to increase their zeal to bring the Faith to those who sat in darkness and the shadows of death. And slowly they conquered. There was something in their gentle nature, their indomitable courage and their untiring zeal, that softened even the most hardened pagan, and led him gently to the light of Christianity. Through the middle Ages, in the face of heresies, schisms and persecutions, noble messengers kept alive in the Church the spirit of the martyrs of old, each year bringing out more clearly the simplicity and beauty of their doctrine and the inherent sanctity and greatness of their mission. On, on, they carried their zealous efforts until at last we find nearly the whole of Europe echoing to the hymns of Christianity and imbued with the spirit of the Catholic doctrine. Christianity it was, in the hearts of the monks and missionaries that wrought the greatest civilization of Europe; for they preserved and fostered in their monasteries and colleges the spirit of art, the spirit of literature and all the noblest and best in the classics of the ancient world. This is the glorious record of those missionaries of old, this is their splendid victory for the Church. They have preserved the light of Faith through every age, and brightened by the blood of ten million martyrs, gave it to our forefathers in the ardent glow of Catholicity.

Nearly three hundred years ago when this land of ours was covered with impenetrable forests and the red men reigned supreme among the savage beasts, there appeared in America, a dark robed stranger. The red man looked with wonder upon this new pale face. He carried no weapon—none of those terrible instruments of torture that gave forth fire and thunder and carried death and destruction in their wake. He settled in their midst and taught them the true story of the Great Spirit and the wonderful joys of the happy hunting grounds. It was the first American missionary. There, in the very infancy of our nation's history, "before the fire of the trapper's gun struck down his woodland game, before the edge of the exile's axe had caught a ray of western sunshine, a mild and steady light is perceptible in the primitive forest: and by its friendly aid we discover the Indian kneeling before the pine-tree cross, while the Black-robe pours on his humbled head the waters of regeneration."

This was the dawn of the Catholic faith in America. The missionaries had begun to bring the faith to another land. They penetrated the wilds of the New World; and there, amidst privations and sufferings and dangers, they reared the Cross and taught the savage native the holy mysteries of the Faith. "But here in the wilderness of America," we

are told, "those noble missionaries met with an enemy more brutal and cruel than the savage Indian whom they had come to convert." The governors of the colonies, men calling themselves Christians and representing the government and religion of England, after issuing barbarous edicts in vain against the missionaries, "excited the fierce tribes of the Indians to deeds of murder against them," even going so far in their cruelty as to set a price upon the head of every Catholic priest. Did this quench the ardent zeal of the missionaries? No, God be praised, the spirit of the ancient martyrs was still warm in their breasts; and, when a few years later, the tyranny of England brought on the Revolution, they gave encouragement to thousands of loyal Catholics, who were among the first to respond to the call for volunteers, and, during that life struggle of the Revolution, fought side by side with their persecutors for their country's liberty. It was through the heroism of the Catholics during that bloody conflict and the kindly sympathy and courage given to the colonies by the loyal missionaries, that, while the bells of liberty were still sounding on the air, and bonfires still proclaimed the freedom of America, there sounded forth another joyous peal. It rang from every little colonial chapel and re-echoing among the hills and forests, announced the dawn of religious freedom throughout the land.

We know the glorious work of the missionaries from the colonial days of old. From its small beginnings the Church grew by their zealous and untiring labor, each year bringing thousands out of darkness and error into the glorious light of the Faith. On, on, they carried the holy missions of God; and now, by the first beams of light of the twentieth century we see them in Canada, in South America, all throughout the West, even in foreign lands—we see them still faithfully carrying out their Master's words, "Go forth and teach all nations."

"A strange instrument," an old legend runs, "hung on the walls of a castle. Its strange strings were broken and covered with dust. All who passed saw it, and wondered for what it was used. Then, one day, a stranger came. His eyes saw the instrument and he immediately took it down. He reverently brushed away the dust and tenderly reset its strings. The chords, long silent, awoke beneath his touch, and, as he played, the hearts of all who heard him were strangely thrilled. It was the Master, long absent, come into his own." The convert understands this. In his heart, there hung a marvellous harp, dust covered with error and indifference, with strings broken, while yet the Master's hand had not found it. Then He came. He touched the long silent chords, and the instrument sprang into new life and grew melodious with joy—deep thatfulness seemed to quiver in every string, and the whole soul of the convert responds to the vibrations of God's grace.

LET HIM ALONE

One of our Catholic contemporaries declares that Catholic writers ought to stop abusing Martin Luther. We agree. There's little sense in abusing him and less glory. He's dead. He can't retort. Moreover his works speak for him. His Fable Talk speaks for him, and against him. The churches that look to him for inspiration speak for him, against him, and about him. Some of them elect him their hero. But what of that? When were Protestant churches ever happy in the selection of their heroes and their heroines, for the matter of that? They have a special grudge against her who has been beautifully called, "Our tainted nation's solitary saint." They follow Luther and they raise bluff Harry to pontifical honors. If they are extravagant in their eulogy, that is no reason why we should run to the opposite extreme, especially as there is no divine law compelling us to take these erratic panegyrist seriously.

There is another reason why we should not be too hard on Luther. He was born and bred a Catholic. In publishing him we publish our own failure. The Church took him, brought him into the monastery, taught him his prayers, grounded him in philosophy and theology, gave him good advice and propounded good principles of morality and self control. But she failed to make him a good monk or a respectable gentleman. The more we detract the heresiarch the more do we emphasize the failure of his preceptors, and the more do we proclaim the inefficacy of the Church's lessons in culture, whether social or moral.

The fact is the Catholic Church must look upon Martin Luther about as the Earl of Gloucester looked upon Edgar, his illegitimate son. "Is this your son, my Lord?" asks the Earl of Kent.

"His breeding, Sir, hath been at my charge: I have so often blushed to acknowledge him, that now I am brazed to it."

Luther's breeding is charged up against the Catholic Church. If he was unfaithful to his solemn vows, then she must blush. If he was a vulgarian of the crudest type, his bad breeding reflects upon his training. All things considered, it is much better to let him alone. Those who have to bear his burly weight are unhappy enough in their possession of it. He is a good reminder and we can afford to let him alone.—Catholic Transcript.

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When we speak of much talking as a fault, we always mean too much talking. Too much, either in quantity or quality, whether it be, as is generally understood, that we are too wordy, and talk too long or too

elaborately, or that we say more on the subject than is wise or true; in the latter case it is called talking rashly. In both cases this garbality is faulty and harmful.—Rev. Sebastian Von Oer, O.S.B.

Granny's
Visits
No. 6

Granny Goes to an Afternoon Tea

Welcome, Granny, dear," greeted the hostess. "We are so glad to have you with us at our little tea party."

Granny plied her knitting needles busily, while others, among the gay throng worked at their wonderful embroideries.

"Granny," said one of the ladies, "do tell us the secret of your youthfulness and health."

"Home cooking and good flour," said Granny, without stopping her work. "Oh, but Granny, we can buy our bread and cakes so cheaply. It doesn't pay to bake our own."

Granny made no answer, for the refreshments were arriving.

"What perfectly delicious bread!" remarked one of the ladies. "Dear Mrs. Jones, where did you buy this bread?" "That's a secret," smiled the hostess. "But you must tell us," they all exclaimed.

"I'll see how you like the cakes before I tell you," she replied. "Did they like them? They all declared they had never tasted such perfectly wonderful cakes."

"Well," announced Mrs. Jones (pointing her forefinger at herself), "I baked them, and the bread, too."

"You baked them?" shouted all in amazement.

"Yes, I, young and giddy as I am, baked them, but—listen! Granny was my teacher, and she impressed on me that good flour is the first requisite in successful baking, and insisted that I should use none but

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