

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY THE REV. F. P. HICKEY, O. S. B.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

HELP IN TEMPTATION

"Behold angels came and ministered to Him." (Matt. IV. 11)

The gospel tells us today how our divine Lord suffered Himself to be tempted by the devil. It was for our sakes that He did so. Each one of us, that we may be worthy to win heaven, must be tried, and assailed, and pass through the conflict. We must face this fact—we shall be tempted by the devil. It is not within anyone's power to escape temptation. The misery of it may welligh overwhelm us. Our self-love will be crushed, for we did not think that we were so vile as the spectres of temptations around us would make us think. We find oftentimes that, when we have resolved to do our best, temptations are the most importunate. Yes, it is true, we are tempted by the devil.

In our misery, when thus tempted and tried, how often do we make a great mistake. We have not the sense of children. In fear and danger, children cry for help; we forget there is One near us, with His angels ready to assist us. He is able to succour them altho' that are tempted" (Heb. ii. 17, 18). "For we have not a high-priest Who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but One tempted in all things as we are, without sin" (Heb. iv. 15).

Our Blessed Lord accepted the ministrations of angels after His temptation to teach us that we are not alone in our misery and our danger. To be tempted is not a sin; but to trust to ourselves to be able to resist and overcome is presumptuous. Pride goeth before a fall. To come out of the conflict unscathed needs help, and help is at hand if we humbly invoke it. The angels are our guardians to assist us in our struggle with their fallen brethren. If the fallen angels hate us because we are Christ's, and our angels are anxious to shield us from evil and ruin for that very same reason. A prayer can summon them to the rescue. To forget their assistance, to venture to stand alone and defend ourselves single-handed from evil, is to imperil our souls. We are bound to pray for help in grave temptation. To fall into sin is our own fault; always our own fault. We could have been saved from the sin, if we had prayed for assistance. The angels are with us wherever we go through life; in every occurrence, in every danger they are at hand. Our passage through the temptations of life is not a forlorn hope; we have our leaders, our friends, our guardians around us. But alas! how often are they forgotten and ignored. Temptations seduce us. Careless souls even love the danger; foolishly disregarding the imminent and eternal consequences.

With what an occupation have the ministering angels been entrusted by God! They first have to arouse us to be afraid of evil; to wish to escape it. Instead of fearing sin, we turn a deaf ear to the promptances which the angels prompt our consciences to urge upon us. We are reluctant to turn from the evil suggestion; the wicked companion; the occasions that we know will be our ruin. It is not that the angels are remiss in their endeavors; it is all our own fault yielding to our sinful desires, clinging to bad habits that will be our eternal ruin. Pray that the angels may not grow weary of us, and that their divine Master may not recall them from their rejected ministrations. How faithful they have been to us! They are interested in us and devoted to us, because we are destined to be their brethren for all eternity. They rejoice over every soul they can save, for each one is another soul redeemed by the precious Blood of our Lord, and rescued from eternal loss.

This life is a time of trial and temptation; but to be forewarned is to be forearmed. We must not cowardly give way, though we have to face the combat, for we are not alone. Remember we can instantly summon assistance. Imitate the great St. Antony, the model of those who are tempted. He tells us that his weapons were the sign of the holy Cross and the most holy name of Jesus. That sacred name, that blessed sign, would bring us instant help. "God is faithful. Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able" (I Cor. x. 13). He will send His angels to defend you, to drive away the enemies of your soul. Temptations would be robbed of their terror, they would be vanquished, if we only remembered to invoke and trust. We must learn this lesson in life—the lesson to remember and pray; for as death approaches, temptations may be more powerful and deadly. The good habit of prayer will then spring to our rescue. The angels will redouble their vigilance. Not only our own prayers, but the prayers of the Church for the dying will be our safeguard. The priest

before he anoints us bids the evil spirits to be banished, and the angel of peace to stand by us; and he prays the Almighty Father to send His holy angel from heaven to guard and protect and defend. Happy indeed will be the death of one who has trusted in the angels in the days of his warfare. He will have endured temptation bravely; his fidelity will have been proved, and his consolation then will be that the angels will come forth to meet him, and bear his soul to receive the crown of life.

ROBBER GANGS LOOT GERMAN CHURCHES

By Rev. Dr. Wilhelm Baron von Capitaine, Cologne, Jan. 15.—Increase in the number of sacrilegious robberies throughout Germany is causing great alarm among church authorities.

Recently a particularly daring robbery took place in Cologne in the Church of St. Mary in the Capitol, which is situated near the Cathedral on a spot which in Roman times was given over to the Capitol, and in the later Christian era was occupied by the palace of Charles Martel. Some one who gained entrance to the church in the morning after Mass, stole a very valuable and highly ornamented bishop's cross, which was studded with precious stones, and the lunette of the monstrance, which was also richly adorned. In addition, the culprit walked off with a small statue of an angel, done in silver and gold, and of great value. A reward of fifty thousand marks has been offered for the return of the stolen articles, but there is small hope of their recovery, as very little success has attended efforts to recover the immense number of articles stolen from churches in recent months.

Judged by the frequency of robberies of churches, there seems to be an organized ring of criminals who specialize in stealing church property. The high price of such metals as gold, silver, copper and lead causes the temptation to steal and unquestionably a great many young people, who heretofore have led honest lives, have been led into crime by the lures set out for them by dealers in metals.

Telegraph wires have been cut from churches, the lead has been stolen from roofs and spires, bronze chains and brass lanterns have been carried off and iron crosses have been taken by the dozen. While these robberies are serious, they cannot, of course, compare with the large number that are sacrilegious in character and which include the theft of chalices, ciboriums and other precious vessels given over to the service of the altar. Nor are these thefts confined to the large cities; towns and villages report alarming numbers of daring church thieves to be at work.

Mausoleums of royal and noble families are not exempt from the frequent reports of coffins being opened and all valuable metals within stolen. In some cities, many old and venerable monuments have been destroyed, among them the celebrated Bismarck and Germania statues in Berlin.

NON-CO-OPERATION IN INDIA AFFECTS TEA PRICES

The doctrine of non-co-operation preached by Chandi, has had serious results on the tea industry in India—the largest tea producing country in the world. Natives under Chandi's leadership, have hindered, blocked and passively opposed British rule and authority, which made it extremely difficult for Tea Planters to secure adequate numbers of coolies to pluck the tea, and once plucked, the Natives have employed every means possible to hold up shipment. The result is that there is a shortage amounting to approximately 80,000,000 lbs. in the world's supply of tea. Prices are rising, and all indications point to still higher figures in the near future.

CROAT DEPUTIES MAY ATTEND PARLIAMENT

By Dr. Frederick Funder, Vienna, Dec. 18.—The so-called Croatian Bloc, composed of sixty-one members of the Yugoslav Parliament who have never taken their seats in that body, is now considering a resolution which will call for a reversal of their policy of isolation and will make them an important element in political life at Belgrade. Inasmuch as this bloc represents the solid body of Croatian Catholics, nearly 3,000,000 strong, their presence in the central Parliament, if they decide upon such action, will insure greater consideration and protection for Catholic interests than has hitherto been the case.

There will undoubtedly be a complete shift in the political line up of the various factions in the Belgrade Parliament, if the Croatian Bloc decides upon active participation in national political affairs. While there is no large party in the national legislature just now which has a definite program for the promotion of Catholic interests—indeed the Croatian deputies themselves have been elected on nationalistic rather than religious lines—never-

theless, the fact that Croats are being constantly attacked for standing in the way of Serbian nationalism and Orthodoxy, will tend to make the Croatian deputies vigilant in defense of Catholic interests. The fact that the national existence of the Croats is inseparable from their Catholic religion and culture, is the reason for the bitter attacks constantly directed against Catholicity by the dominant Serbian parties. For this reason, no Croatian deputy can fail to defend the Catholic Church if he is anxious to preserve the rights of the people of his own nation.

CROATS UNIT IN RELIGION  
Croatian Catholics can look forward to active participation in the affairs of the Belgrade Parliament, with all the more composure because their nation is an absolute unit in matters of religion. Attempts to form in Croatia a so-called "National Reform Church" similar to the Czecho-slovakian Schismatic sect, have failed. The priests, Vidacic, Domkovic, and Cerowsky, who headed the movement for the "Reform Church" have been excommunicated by the Holy See and they are now deserted by their former followers.

The wisdom of the proposed re-entry of the Croatian Bloc into national politics is indicated by the fact that there appears to be a systematic effort on the part of the dominant parties to crush Catholicity in Yugoslavia. Although the number of Catholics in Yugoslavia is only a little less than the number of adherents of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the former are allowed to exercise very little influence and in many instances are complaining because of alleged governmental injustices. Societies composed of school children have been suppressed, numerous Catholic schools have been closed, the Bishops are forbidden to have any direct communication with the Holy See, several Catholic feast days have been declared abolished in Croatia and Slavonia, and Orthodox feast days have been instituted in entirely Catholic parts of the country. In addition to these hindrances, the State, acting under pretence of carrying out agrarian reforms, has confiscated Catholic Church property without touching that of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Also discriminations against the Catholic Church are apparent in the national budget.

ABSENCE SEEN TO BE MISTAKE  
Hitherto the Croatian deputies have refused to take their seats in the Belgrade Parliament, their object being to protest in that manner against the centralist constitution of the nation which, they claim, infringes upon the rights of national and religious minorities for the benefit of the Serbian nation and the Orthodox Church. With the Croats absent, the defense of Catholic interests at Belgrade has devolved upon a few delegates representing the Catholic Slovenes, who, being in a very small minority have had comparatively little influence. Considerable doubt has been expressed from the beginning as to whether or not the Croatian Catholic deputies would be able to carry their point by means of their absent protest. It has been pointed out that those who are absent are always considered in the wrong. Also on many occasions it has been clear that had the Croats been present they would have been able to decide important issues in conformity with Catholic interests. In their absence their enemies have had a comparatively easy time of it.

The Yugoslav State has a total population of 11,810,000. This total includes: 5,500,000 members of the Orthodox Church; 1,400,000 Mohammedans; 200,000 Protestants; 60,000 Jews; 50,000 members of various small sects, and 4,600,000 Catholics. Of the Catholics, 2,800,000 are Croats.

DOCTRINE OF CHURCH ON PROPERTY

The Department of Social Action of the National Catholic Welfare Council has announced the publication in pamphlet form of three important papers by the Rev. Dr. John A. Ryan, director of the Department on "The Christian Doctrine of Property." One of the papers, that on the suggested limitation of capitalist property, has already received considerable attention from Catholic social workers abroad and has been published in French and Italian. The first paper has the same title as the general subject and in addition to the treatise on the limitation of capitalist property the pamphlet includes "The Church and a Better Social Order."

The first paper is historical in character beginning with the pronouncements of Christ Himself as found in the Gospels and passing on to the saints and the doctors of the Church and ending with the pronouncements of Cardinal Manning and Pope Leo XIII. The doctrine of property embodied in Christ's teachings did not condemn the private ownership of goods but merely required their right use, according to Dr. Ryan. These doctrines he says, are not explicitly stated but are chiefly deductions from Our Lord's insistence on the intrinsic sacredness of human individuals, and the fundamental equality of all men.

The most striking recognition of the claims of all men to the bounty of the earth, asserts Dr. Ryan, is

found in the early writings of the Fathers of the Church. They express very definitely, he maintains, the belief that the superfluities of the rich are the necessities of the poor.

When some thirty-five years ago, says Dr. Ryan, this doctrine was reiterated by Cardinal Manning, he was denounced as an anarchist by the papers of the day. While Pope Leo condemned State ownership of all instruments of production, he asserts, he did not reject State regulation of private property. In discussing the attitude of the Church today toward the economic problems involved in the treatise, Dr. Ryan asks: "Why should the Church take any attitude toward a social or industrial system?" "What are her lines of approach to industrial problems?" "What pronouncement has the Church actually made concerning a better social order?" The third paper is devoted to an answer to these questions. The treatise on the suggested plan for a limitation of capitalist property was originally contributed to "Scientia," an Italian magazine dealing with social problems.

TO REGULATE "MOVIES"

Protests against lax enforcement of censorship laws for motion pictures have finally resulted in the Dublin Corporation asking the Free State government to take over the task of motion picture regulation. In the movement for enforcement of the censorship laws the Press Social Guild and the Catholic Vigilance Association have taken the lead.

At present the laws provide that licenses shall be issued for the exhibition of those pictures only

which have been approved by the official censor. This rule has never been enforced in Dublin, however, and many of the pictures which are shown in recent months are of such character that they are considered harmful particularly when viewed by the young. Pictures glorifying crime and treating

indeecency as a rule of life, have called forth vigorous protests. One result of the activities of the Catholic Vigilance Association has been the Irish newspapers have ceased to publish filthy details of English divorce cases and the sale of objectionable literature has been curtailed.

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