

## FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. M. BOSSAERT

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER  
EASTER

## PERSISTENCE IN SIN

We read in today's Gospel how our divine Saviour promised the Holy Spirit to His disciples, saying that He would convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment. This promise was fulfilled when the Holy Ghost came down at Pentecost upon the assembled Apostles and Disciples, but though He supplied the plainest evidence of the truth and divine origin of the Gospel, a great number of the Jews and pagans persisted in sin and unbelief. It has been the same in every age, and is still the case; there always have been people who have hardened their hearts, and sunk deeper and deeper into sin, in consequence of the very things that make for the salvation of others, such as the Word of God, the Sacraments, public worship and holy seasons. Let us examine this hardness of heart and persistence in sin a little more closely. They are due to various causes, viz.:

1. *Unbelief.* This is a very obvious cause. When a man no longer believes in God, in the immortality of the soul, or in heaven and hell, he has no reason for curbing his passions, abandoning sin, and being converted; at least he has no supernatural reasons, such as are required if his contrition is to be true and acceptable to God. An unbeliever will continue to sin as long as he can; and should actual sin be impossible to him, his heart will still cling to evil, and his amendment will be merely outward. This is why so many sinners nowadays live in a state of complete obduracy and hardness of heart; they have lost faith. Their conscience may raise its voice in protest, and they may listen to the truths of Christianity, but they persist in their evil ways, for why, they ask, should we trouble about penance and amendment, since everything ends at death, after which we look forward to neither rewards nor punishment?

2. *The habit of sinning* is another reason of hardness of heart. We all know the force of habit which renders easy and pleasant, if not actually necessary, what was at first difficult and painful. This is particularly true of the habit of sinning. When for the first time we commit any particular sin, we feel an aversion to it, and our conscience condemns us vigorously. The second and the third time it is generally easier to commit that sin, for it no longer appears so hideous and abominable as it did the first time; and the more frequently it is committed, the more trivial does it appear. The result is that an habitual sinner falls gradually into horrible offences against purity and temperance, he curses and blasphemes, he cheats, slanders and injures his neighbors most flagrantly, and yet his conscience does not reproach him, nor does he ever seriously think: "I am a great sinner, I must improve, or else I shall perish eternally. Thus the habit of sinning begets quite naturally hardness of heart. Let him, who cares for his own soul, resist at the outset; let him avoid the first sin, and dread becoming an habitual sinner.

3. *Presumption* is another cause of hardness of heart. Many go on sinning without ever intending to improve, but they hope, nevertheless, that God will be merciful and not condemn them. Such presumption in thus relying on God's mercy leads to destruction and not to salvation. God is indeed infinitely merciful and ready to forgive all sins, however great and numerous they may be; but He shows mercy only to the penitent, to such as are really contrite and determined to amend, and to shun with all their might every immediate occasion of sin. An impenitent sinner, who recklessly persists in sinning, is excluded from God's mercy and is subjected to His just punishment. The devil delights in making sinners believe that they have everything to hope for and nothing to fear from God; for in their unhappy self-deception they lose all fear of Him, and never think of amendment, but continue to sin until they are overtaken by His wrath.

These, then, are the chief reasons why a sinner hardens his heart; may there be none amongst us to whom the name of "hardened sinner" is applicable! Such persons are in great peril of being cast into hell. You all know the proverb: "To sin is human, but to persist in sin is devilish." Take care to not like human beings and not like devils. Beware of continuing in sin, and let this holy Easter season be a time of reconciliation with God; make a good Confession, and if you are so unhappy as to fall into grievous sin, rise promptly by the help of God's grace; be on your guard against continuing in sin, for it leads to destruction. Amen.

## UNITY

Christ prayed "That all might be one." The Church has always regarded unity as something sacramental. Even the gentle Apostle of love greeted one of the early heresiarchs as "the first born of the devil." Schism and heresy have always been likened to a rending of the seamless garment of Christ. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." The unity of God was to be a symbol of the unity of His followers. One

is tempted to ask is this the unity which Protestants are seeking? Assuredly it is not. The very core of his religion is independence in belief, and individuality in religion. Having completely lost sight of an organic, self-conscious Church established by Christ, neither unity, nor uniformity means much to Protestantism. The leaders of the sects may see wasteful overlapping, and efficiency correspondingly lowered. But this is business, not religion. Waste is worse than dogma. Get rid of one to serve the other. Interests of various Christian denominations should be pooled, and the lowest common divisor be the basis of faith. For instance, the foolish and meaningless, "Fatherhood of God, and brotherhood of man." There is a unity which is visible, and continuous. It began with Christ, and ends only with time. It is not of man, but of God. The Church cannot imperil this unity, and it will not. It invites others to the city of confusion, not to babel of voices. Any other promise of unity is dishonest. No one gives what he has not got. An aggregation does not make a unit. The Catholic Church invites all to reunion, assuring them that they will in reality come into the possession of that Oneness promised by Christ to His followers.—New World.

## "JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD"

From the claim of Jesus Christ to be God-Man, we see that He is our Lord and Master. Such were His words at the last supper when He said: "You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am." (John xiii-13.) Being our Creator, our Redeemer, our Lawgiver, our Teacher, our Judge places Him in the position of Master, to Whom we are to be subject and to serve.

"What think you of Christ?" was asked by Himself during His own lifetime. Various answers were given by the disciples, some wherein it was evident that they thought Him a prophet, a man of God, but it was Peter who said: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God." In our day, as well as through the centuries that have passed since that question was asked, there have been many opinions as exactly who is Jesus Christ.

## WHAT THE CHURCH SAYS OF JESUS CHRIST

The Catholic teaching contains substantially four ideas. First Jesus is God, equal to God the Father and God the Holy Ghost, possessed of all the divine attributes, power and majesty. Secondly, Jesus Christ is man, having a body and a soul like ours, endowed with all human faculties. Thirdly, while Jesus is both God and man, God from eternity, man from time, yet He is but one Person, one individual being and that person is divine. Fourthly, the manhood possessed by Christ, though it is really assumed into the Divine Person, still remains entirely human, so that in respect of His manhood Christ is of one substance with us. Words could not more clearly state this doctrine than the definition used in the Athanasian Creed. "The right faith is that we believe and confess that Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, is both God and man. He is God from the substance of the Father, begotten before all ages; and man from substance of His mother born in time; perfect God, perfect man, subsisting of a rational soul and human flesh; equal to the Father according to Godhead; less than the Father according to His manhood; who, though He be both God and Man, nevertheless is not two but the one Christ; not one by the conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by the taking of manhood unto God."

## CHURCH DEFENDS HIS DIVINITY

At various times in the history of Christianity opponents have attacked this doctrine in one point or another. If with Arius of old some deny that Christ was truly God, assigning to Him the place, as it were, of a demigod, making of Him the most perfect of all creatures, but still allowing Him to live only a creature, the Church summons the witnesses of Apostolic days to proclaim the truth. She calls upon the greatest defender of Christ's divinity, St. John, and he bears testimony, for he says that the Word, who is Jesus Christ, "was with God, and the Word was God." She appeals to St. Paul, who staked all upon his belief in Christ's divinity, when he states that He "who is the Redeemer is He who is over all things, God blessed forever" (Romans ix, 5), and when he proclaims that Jesus Christ "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Phil. ii, 6).

## CHURCH DEFENDS HIS HUMANITY

Or, of some, admitting that Christ is God, on the other hand, deny to Him true human nature, either in its entirety or in part, the Church is just as jealous in guarding this side of the truth, again appealing to the teaching of Christ's chosen messengers. Thus, when she condemned the teaching that declared there was in Christ no human soul such as that which exists in man, when she declared as false the assertion that the human nature was lost and swallowed up in the divine, and when again she inveighed against the opinion of the Monothelites, who would curtail the human faculties of Christ, she invented no new doctrine, but simply reiterated the first teaching of Christianity. She cites the Evangelists, who continually insist

upon the humanity of a Christ in the complete sense of the word; who depict the Saviour as a man who knew with a human mind, who obeyed and served with a human will, who prayed with a human soul, she tells us of the simplicity and hiddenness of the thirty of the thirty-three years that He spent between Bethlehem and Calvary; she shows us how He spent nearly thirty of them proving that He was man, reserving only the three at the end to prove He was God; she shows how He proved it slowly, with tender deliberation, point by point, baby and child, boy and man, with one set purpose moving unhurriedly from cradle to the Cross. The Church cites St. John, who, without equivocation or reserve, says that "the Word was made flesh," who asserts that Jesus Christ "is come into the flesh." She cites St. Paul, who says that the Son of God "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." Or again, she cites St. Peter, who speaks of Christ's human spirit side by side with His human body (First Peter ii, 18). Indeed, in all the New Testament there is nothing clearer than Christ's true and complete humanity, and as a matter of fact, however, many have assailed the divinity of the Saviour, especially in the later days, have questioned His humanity.

The whole life of Jesus, from Bethlehem to Calvary, is replete with proofs that show forth the double, yet single, truth of the Godhead and manhood united in one person. Enter the stable at Bethlehem and you behold lying upon the straw an infant born of a woman, a man like unto all men; but you behold also a God whose coming the angels announce and who receive the homage of the shepherds and of the kings of the East. At the baptism, in the Jordan you behold a man, but you should also God for whom the Heavens are opened upon whom the Holy Spirit descends, and of whom the Father says: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Go with Him into the desert and you will witness a man who hungered and thirsted, but you will witness also a God who is ministered unto by angels. Journey with Him and you will see a man who lives like other men, who, in fact, lives a life of poverty, but you will see also God who cures the sick, and of His own power raises the dead to life. Upon the Cross you behold the man stricken, terribly tortured, whose life the agony of thirst, who is left desolate, but you also behold the God with whose suffering nature itself sympathizes, and who, on the third day, is to rise from the dead, thus giving the greatest proof of His divinity.

Being God, and being man; having created, redeemed and taught us, and since He will be our judge, there can be no doubt of His mastery over us and our corresponding duty to be subject to His teachings. "You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well for so I am."—The Tablet.

## DANGER OF MIXED MARRIAGES

PROBLEM IS DIFFICULT TO SOLVE BECAUSE HUMAN NATURE IS NOT EASILY GUIDED

Right Rev. Bishop Drumm of Des Moines, Iowa, thus speaks on the subject of mixed marriage:

## A DIFFICULT PROBLEM

"Bear not the yoke with unbelievers." (If. C. 6, 14.) One of the most difficult and dangerous problems which the Church and the faithful have to face in this country is the problem of mixed marriage. What is mixed marriage? Popularly accepted it is a marriage of a Catholic with anyone who is not a Catholic. In the eyes of the Church, however, there is a difference between a non-Catholic who is baptized and one who is not baptized and Jews.

I say it is a difficult problem, because of the social union and mingling of all classes of persons, the low notions of sacred marriage which prevail generally outside the Church, the vague knowledge and religion and the leveling ease with which all religions are recognized, and even no religions at all readily tolerated.

## A DANGEROUS PROBLEM

I say it is dangerous, because, in marriage these conditions can so easily affect the Catholic body and lead to loss of religion, loss of faith, loss of morality, discontent in married life, separation and divorce, race suicide, and irreligious children; and consequently a rightful loss of mournful souls. I sometimes wonder if lack of real faith is the cause of so many mixed marriages, or whether mixed marriage is the cause of so much loss of faith. I don't know. The most faithful Catholics rarely contract marriage with non-Catholics. If the Catholic party is all right, then the non-Catholic becomes a Catholic before marriage. Non-Catholics must know that they do not get the best Catholics, only the ones wandering on the edge of Catholicity. That very circumstance increases the danger, for a weak Catholic makes a bad impression, while a strong Catholic is an immense power for good to all with whom he comes in contact.

Hence mixed marriage becomes a most serious problem for the Church and the faithful, and must be prevented or protected with the utmost care. It also affects the well or ill being of the State and the family.

The divine law prohibits mixed marriage if there is danger of the Catholic party or the children being lost to the Faith.

The law of the Church most severely prohibits such marriages.

## SHOULD BE PREVENTED

Bishop and priests are bound to prevent them whenever it can be done.

If they cannot stop them, they must scrutinize carefully that the parties are fit to marry, that the marriage is performed according to the laws of God and the Church, and that the precautions are likely to be kept. No banns are allowed to be published; no religious rites are allowed; instructions must be given the non-Catholic party in what the Catholic believes, at least regarding matrimony; a dispensation must be obtained from the law for the Catholic party to contract such a marriage. All marriages, whether Catholic or between a Catholic and any non-Catholic must be performed before the priest and two legal witnesses, otherwise they are null and void, and the Church does not recognize the parties as being married at all. No Catholic can be married except before a priest.

## THE DISPENSATION

The Church will grant a dispensation, that is, it withholds the law in a particular case, but only on the fulfillment of certain conditions, viz.:

(1) There must be just and serious reasons for it; for instance if the Catholic cannot get a suitable Catholic husband or wife; if there is hope of the non-Catholic's conversion to the Faith.

(2) The Catholic party must be absolutely free to practice his or her religion; and must prudently by example and instruction help the non-Catholic.

(3) Both parties must promise to have all the children that may be born of the union baptized and brought up in the Catholic faith.

These promises are regularly required in writing and signed by both parties. Of course, it goes without saying that there must be no other ceremony before or after the Catholic ceremony.

Catholics are also forbidden to marry fallen-away Catholics or those who have joined forbidden societies, or public sinners who refuse to receive the Sacraments.

There is no marriage between a person who is certainly not baptized and a baptized Christian—unless, of course, a dispensation has been obtained from the impediment of different worship.

The Church has nothing to do legally with the marriages of persons beyond her pale, unless such persons wish to form an alliance with Catholics; then they must conform to the laws of the Church, for she has everything to say and do about the Sacrament of marriage for her own children. If it is found that a previous marriage is valid according to the laws of God and the Church, then it stands, and she cannot permit a second marriage until that one is dissolved, not by divorce, but by death. If it is found that that previous marriage is not valid, then she declares there was no marriage, and the party is free to marry. This process is frequently followed even by the State courts, when marriages are declared null and void because of non-conformity with certain civil laws. There are many such invalid marriages, both in Church and State investigations.

## JEWS AND QUAKERS

It is generally believed that only the Catholic Church is opposed to mixed marriages. The Jews and the Quakers are very much more emphatically and much more successfully opposed to them. The reasons are perfectly plain to any one who thinks on the matter. Marriage is the most intimate relationship; religion goes into the very fibres of life more deeply than anything else. Successfully happy unions for life are difficult of attainment at best, when all elements unite to make them so. When religion, the most vital of all, is not in the cementing bond, then it is almost impossible. If love and religion go hand in hand then there is hope of much happiness; where either is wanting, then there is strife, misunderstanding, cross-purposes, disappointment and failure.

## STARTLING FACTS

I might quote you statistics to show the miserable results of mixed marriage to every one concerned; but I prefer to give you facts, local, up-to-date, and personal. I have made a survey and a tabulation of one hundred mixed marriages in a certain district. Some of them were married only a few years and others for many years—all fair for a good test. I know the requirements for practical Catholic life, and I know the practical life of these people. I studied them from a Catholic viewpoint, but I had in mind also general usefulness.

Of the hundred, eight are as good families as any one could wish for, seventeen are fairly good, and seventy-five I am forced to put in what may be called the N-G class. Hardly any of them go to church with any regularity, many of them not at all; many have been divorced; they are not dependable for church support, for the most part they are not successful in temporal affairs, not good to meet their obligations; some are a scandal, and many in the criminal class; religion means little or nothing to them, and justice and morality mean less. They are for the most part not much good for God or Church or country.

Now that seems an extraordinary showing, but it is a fair and honest tabulation, and I believe it will be found true in any similar survey. Just think, 8% of mixed marriages turn out well, 17% fairly well, and 75% practically total failures. Can any sensible Catholic afford to take such a risk in such an important affair of life. Certainly not without serious consideration, and much constant prayer, and much wise counsel with wise priests and good directors and parents.

Catholic young people, study your catechism, learn your holy Faith, and be staunch in its practice; guard your senses and control your emotions and your passions; watch your inclinations, select your associations, and beware of compromising yourselves and of the first approaches that bring the evil train of mixed marriage miseries. Remember the Church is a wise mother to you. Go to confession and consult your pastor, and never get married except before a priest.—Catholic Bulletin.

## PRAYER

"In this age of minute—perhaps over a minute—specialization in science, and in its applied branches such as medicine and surgery, can it really be argued that, admitting prayer to be a useful thing, there should be no specialists in that subject? Yet it may fairly be said that this is exactly what the members of contemplative Orders set out to be. No; if prayer be of any use, the scientific specialist can not logically cavil at the prayer specialist—the contemplative.

"Nor from the same scientific standpoint are the self-abnegation and mortification practised by the contemplative open to any sort of criticism. No workers in science gain greater estimation amongst their fellows than those who have unselfishly devoted themselves to the prosecution of studies which could bring them no pecuniary return and, to do so, have resolutely turned their backs on pursuits which, with the intellects which they possessed, must certainly have led to that wealth which is the goal of so many today. Nor is this estimation denied to those whose scientific work has lain in fields where none but the humblest and dullest of flowers flourish—fields underlain by no auriferous veins.

"Further, it will hardly be necessary to remind those in any way familiar with the lives of men of science that many of them have suffered great hardships, and not a few have faced death in its most

terrifying forms some of them succumbing as 'martyrs of science,' and all in the pursuit of knowledge.

"Once more we may say that if it be granted, as by Catholics it must be, that prayer is a good thing, it is impossible to applaud the man of science and decri the man of prayer, or even to compare the contemplative unfavorably with his active brother."

One condition we should always make in our prayers is that what we ask be to God's glory and our soul's benefit, and to the honor and service of God. It is a waste of prayer and an ineffectual prayer to ask for anything otherwise. God is infinite wisdom and He knows precisely what will be the effect of every granted petition. He is goodness, and He cannot give us, in answer to our petition, any seeming good which is really evil. Therefore, to pray to God for something which may be harmful to us, to pray for something for our own sake, regardless of His glory, is to make a vain prayer and one which God cannot hear. Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.

A RECORD ALTOGETHER  
UNIQUE

Few indeed will be able to take exception to the statement of a writer in the London Tablet that the record in English Catholic life, established by the illustrious Vaughan family, is "altogether unique." As the correspondent notes: "Col. John Vaughan's six sons became priests and three of them Bishops. Here is a list: Herbert—Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster; Roger—Archbishop of Sydney, N. S. W.; John S.—Bishop of Sebastopolis; Kenelm—secular priest; Joseph—a Benedictine priest; Bernard—a Jesuit priest. The Colonel also had five daughters: Gladys—joined the Visitation nuns; Teresa—became a Sister of Charity; Clare—became a Poor Clare; Mary—entered the Augustinian Convent; Margaret—entered an Augustinian Convent. Besides sons and daughters, the Colonel had three brothers, all of whom became priests—viz., William, Bishop of Plymouth; Richard, a Jesuit, and Edmund, a Redemptorist."—Catholic Transcript.

The Cross is laid on the ground, and Jesus stretched upon it. It is, after much exertion, jerked into the hole ready to receive it. . . . There He hung, a perplexity to the multitude, a terror to evil spirits, the wonder, the awe, yet the joy, the adoration of the Angels.—Cardinal Newman.



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