

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

REV. F. P. HICKER, O. S. B.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD COMMANDMENTS

"The Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and Him only shalt thou serve." (Matt. iv. 10.)

These words of our Blessed Lord, my dear brethren, remind us of the authority and power of the Commandments. They are a quotation from the words of Moses, and he gave them to the children of Israel as the words of the Almighty giving him the Law. The Commandments of the Old Law were renewed by Christ, the Son of God, in the New Law. They, then, have a double claim on our obedience and reverence. Stand by them, and your salvation is assured. "Thou shalt know that the Lord thy God, He is a strong and faithful God, keeping His covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments unto a thousand generations." (Deut. vii. 9.)

Yet there are men who resent them. They declare that the Commandments infringe on their liberty; and because no immediate penalty is dealt out to them for breaking them, they deride those who keep them as being slaves to tyranny. Wherefore, how thankful we should be for the Ten Commandments! God knows what is good for us; He gives us them as safeguards. True, obedience costs something; but remember, obedience is always rewarded. The Commandments are an infringement on our liberty! As well say a freeman in a nursery is an infringement on the liberty of the children! Instead, then, of resenting the Commandments, we should accept them with gratitude, and the work of our life is to keep them faithfully.

Knowledge of them, therefore, is necessary. And the more we understand them, the more we shall be led to love and reverence them.

The first three Commandments regard Almighty God: our worship for Him; our respect for His very Name; our obligation to keep holy one day each week in His honour. The first is fulfilled by our acknowledging the one true God, by adoration and worship, and turning from all others to Him alone. Prayer, then, practically is the fulfilment of it—prayer, by which we acknowledge Him Lord and Master; by which we desire His honour and glory; by which we turn to Him in all our needs; by which we ask our Father's pardon for all our shortcomings and negligences. Each day claims this time for prayer, and we cannot even limit it to certain times, for in danger and temptation we are bound to seek help and protection in prayer.

And the second Commandment hedges round the Name of God with respect and veneration. "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain; for He shall not be unpunished that taketh His Name upon a vain thing." (Deut. v. 11.) This is the Commandment which is broken, more than any other, for nothing! In laughter, in a joke, in surprise, as a mere exclamation, the sacred Name of God, the sacred Name of Jesus, is drawn down by young and old alike in vain. But how much more terrible, when greed, drink, rage, revenge, burst out into oaths and curses and blasphemies! Any exclamation can show your anger; why offend the Almighty by dragging down His sacred Name? Check yourselves, lest you give bad example by such words. The habit is soon learned, and seldom overcome. What a judgment awaits those who contaminate the young! "He shall not go unpunished."

Impressive is the wording of the third Commandment: "Remember thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath day." God demands this observance from us, week after week. By observing it, we acknowledge that we are His servants and His children; we bless Him for the Redemption He has granted us; we draw down fresh graces and blessings on our souls. And those who do not remember? Those who forget and wilfully neglect—what of them? They insult the great God by their disobedience and contempt. Their forgetfulness even is no excuse, for they are commanded to remember!

And how are we to keep the day holy? So that there should be no error or mistake about this, the first Precept of the Church lays down: "To keep the Sundays and holidays of obligation holy, by hearing Mass and reading from servile work." And the Catechism declares a mortal sin to neglect Mass on those days. And we are bound to obey the Church and accept its ordinances, for Christ has said: "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me." (Luke x. 16) There are certain valid reasons, excusing from Mass and allowing work. In certain emergencies, to prevent grave loss, the work, of a necessity, has to be continued on Sundays. In those cases the workman are free from sin, both in labouring and in missing Mass. Again, the sick, those nursing the sick, those dwelling too far off, are free from the obligation of Mass. But we have to be on our guard against laxity, against opening the door too wide to excuses and pleas; else laziness, unwillingness, neglect even, dress themselves up in a cloak of some kind of excuse.

It is sad to see how easily the habit of missing Mass can be acquired. How the conscience becomes torpid, and never gives any sign of fear or remorse for the

dreadful sin. No wonder their souls are dead, for they stay away from that which would give them life. It is the cry, wrung from the Sacred Heart of Jesus by those who miss Mass: "You will not come to Me that you may have life." (1 John v. 10.)

How can such neglect be accounted for? Do they know their obligation? Yes. Do they believe in the Sacrifice of the Mass, and understand it? Yes. Any excuse is made—you know what frivolous ones—but the reason, not the excuse, is their insolent indifference to God. They have learned to have no respect for Him, no care, no love, no fear. St. Paul cries out to them: "O senseless Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been set forth, crucified among you?" (Gal. iii. 1.) This is what takes place at every Mass, but they care not.

My dear brethren, reverence Holy Mass! Pray for those who neglect it. Let your prayer be: O Lord, "look not on their stubbornness of this people, nor on their wickedness and sin." (Deut. ix. 27.)

THE ANGELUS

Sacred Heart Review

"If we fight like heroes and pray like saints," say America's Cardinals, "soon will America overcome more force by greater force, and conquer lust of power by the nobler power of sacrifice and faith."

Exhorting the nation to turn to God in prayer while the American army confronts the enemy, the Cardinals counsel continued obedience to the request of the Holy Father in petitioning our Lord that peace may be restored, and they recommend: "Let us, moreover, each day, until the peace for which we fight crowns our efforts, say daily, three times, morning at rising, at noon and in the evening, the Angelus, for the guidance of our rulers, the success of our arms, the unity of the nations and the welfare of heroes."

Another result of this instruction must be an increased devotion to the recitation of the Angelus, a custom of Catholic lands that has given inspiration to warriors, to men of prayer, to artists, and poets, from the mightiest down to the lowly peasants whom Millet made his theme.

The "Evening Song of the Breton Fisherman" tells of the holy practice when:

The tolls of the day are over and past, The fisherman comes to his rest at last, The bells are ringing the vesper chime In buried cities beneath the sea; And the calm of the holy even-time Has wrought its peace on the world and me.

Ave Maria! in mercy keep The resting land and the restless deep.

The universality of the salutation is suggested by Dr. Maurice Francis Egan in these lines:

"Ave Maria" prelude of the Word; "Ave Maria" first on Gabriel's lips; "Ave Maria" soft as sound of ships White winged and speeding the sweet words are heard Upon the world's dark flood.

Twas last upon the lips of Charlemagne; False Julien fell when he uttered; Napoleon lost it—twas not quite forgot— And, at the end, he spoke it not in vain, Because he spoke it well.

Charles Warren Stoddard describes the triple beads of Ave Maria beads, from church towers:

At dawn, the joyful peal of bells In consecrated citadels, Rings on the sweet and drowsy air A brief, melodious call to prayer; For Mary, Virgin, meek and lowly, Conceive of the Spirit Holy, As the Lord's Angel did declare.

At noon, above the fretful street, Our souls are lifted to repeat The prayer, with low and wistful voice, "According to Thy word and choice, Though sorrowful and heavy laden, So be it done to Thy Handmaid." Then, all the sacred bells rejoice.

At eve, with roses in the west, The daylight's withering bequest, Ring, prayerful bells, white blossoms bright The stars, the lilies of the night; Or all the songs the years have sung us, "The Word made Flesh has dwelt among us," Is still our ever-new delight.

In an exquisite poem, "Ecce Ancilla Domini," Jean E. U. Nealis pays tributes to the Angelus:

The morning breaks, and the vapors cling Heavy and thick, over land and sea; But sweet and clear are the bells that ring Their beautiful "Angelus Domini!" Nearer and clearer, thro' mist and rain,

O Angelus bells, your music thrills; Till the clouds are lifted of care and pain, And we say, "Be it done, as the Master will!" Ecce Ancilla Domini.

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All night the tempest raged loud and high, And the troubled waves, with crash and roar, Still sob out their sorrow remorsefully On the rocky breast of the sounding shore; While over their restless turbid swells The Angelus floats like a "Peace, be still!"

And we pray with the prayer of those noontide bells; "Be it done in us ever, Thy blessed Will!" Ecce Ancilla Domini.

But at eventide, when the winds are calm And a sea of glory the sunset seems; Like the last sweet strain of the Complin psalm, Or the angel's songs, that we hear "in dreams,"

The Angelus throbs through the fragrant air, O'er the ruddy glow of the sunlit sea; And we answer the Church's evening prayer, "In life or death, be it here, or there, Ecce Ancilla Domini.

Another Catholic poet, Mary Catherine Crowley, expressed in verse a very lovely thought, in answer to the question: "When first rang the Angelus?"

What master wrought the sweet toned bells, That, soft o'er vales and sylvan dells, The Angelus first rang? Gleaned silver pure and virgin gold, Like souls, within the dark clay mould, Ere rich their spirit voice rolled

As though an angel sang? Or, voicing the celestial thought, Pealed forth the chimes, by seraphs' fraught With melody, that thrilled From star to star, when Gabriel soared, Before the flame-white Throne adored

With Mary's answer, and the Lord The earth with heaven filled? Or, first in Nazareth's holy glade, When Christ, a Child, there dwelt and prayed, The flower-bells of spring Bade He, with fragrant breath of song,

To hail His mother blessed among All women, and the wind-swayed throng The Angelus did ring— Till music laden was the air, Till rose above the valley fair The chanting echoes; thus Was nature's sweetest anthem heard.

CATHOLIC IDEALS IN ANGLICAN CHURCH

During the past seventy years there has been a very remarkable renaissance of Catholic ideas in the Anglican Church. The schism which the despotic caprice of Henry VIII. imposed on a servile clergy tended at first merely to substitute the supremacy of the King for that of the Pope. The other dogmas of the Church were not tampered with, and scarcely a single change was made in the exterior of worship. In the succeeding reign, the governing party, infected by the notions of Zwingli and Calvin, began to mutilate the doctrine and the liturgy; they proscribed the Mass, replaced the altars by tables, despoiled the churches, and gave a general license to the priests to take to themselves wives. The revolution resulted in very little more than a state of great confusion and religious anarchy. And when the Crown passed to Mary Tudor the first measures she took to re-establish the Catholic religion were accepted with sentiment and relief. Queen Elizabeth found herself involved against the Pope and Spain, and although she would gladly have remained faithful to the headless Catholicism, the political situation obliged her to accentuate the Protestantism of her Church more than her taste directed.

With the advent of the Stuarts came the return to activity of a party which deplored the recent Protestant ravages; but the Puritans attacked more fiercely than ever anything that professed to retain or to re-establish Catholicism, whether

in the hierarchy, the Articles of Belief, or the forms of worship. Archbishop Laud was impeached, and he preceded by some years his master, Charles I. to the scaffold. The result of the civil war was the triumph of the Puritans, and a Presbyterian Calvinism supplanted the Episcopal Church, which was disorganized and proscribed. The Restoration, however, gave an opportunity for re-establishing the Church on the principles of Laud and the "Carolines divines," and then drawn up and promulgated the final edition of the Prayer Book—the one it is now proposed to revise, and in which the sacramental and sacerdotal character of the English Church is most brought into relief. But the strange regime to which men's consciences had been submitted for more than a century, they could not recover lost ground, and the accession of George I. marked their definite defeat.

In the midst of the 18th century, however, two religious movements arose, Methodism and Evangelicalism. Methodism only resulted in the detachment from the Anglican Church of yet one more Protestant sect, which estranged itself even more than Anglicanism from Catholic forms and Catholic ideas. And all the principles of the Evangelicals tended to thrust Anglicanism deeper into Protestantism. They are still powerful elements in the Church, and they have scarcely any notion of the Church as a living and visible body, of the episcopate as the depository of the Apostolic succession, or the priest as the minister of the Sacraments. The sacramental dogma is a thing about which they give themselves no concern. The doctrine of the Real Presence appears to them a grave superstition.

Thus, from the revolt of Henry VIII. to the first quarter of the 19th century we see one law in operation. We see that of the two elements which at first professed to combine in the Anglican Church, the Protestant element always found the advantage, and the Church steadily receded, not only from the Pope, but also from those Catholic ideas and ceremonies which she had at the beginning of the estrangement seemed anxious to preserve. In the first quarter of the 19th century, if any member of the Church of England, cleric or lay, ignorant or learned, had been asked if he were a Protestant or Catholic he would have thought the question were jesting. He was a Protestant, glorying in the fact. The very word Catholic called up to him a vision of a medley of superstitions, from which it was the glory of his forefathers to have escaped three centuries before. Then, oddly enough, the tide turned towards Catholicism, and we found groups of distinguished Anglicans laboring to revive Catholic dogma within the Anglican fold. The Anglo-Catholic movement received the most staggering blow from within its own ranks, when its eminent leaders, Newman, Manning, the two Wilberforces, and many others, entered the Catholic Church, and proclaimed the failure of Anglo-Catholicism. Yet the reaction towards Catholicism continued to grow within the Establishment, until today in England Catholic ideas and practices have taken a powerful hold upon the Anglican Church.

In 1895 there was a strong movement, led by Lord Halifax, in favor of reunion with the Holy See. Speaking on behalf of a powerful association of Churchmen he gave the Pope an assurance that he could count on a sympathetic response to any appeal which might be addressed to the Church of England. This was upon the Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XIII., put forth his famous letter, "Ad Anglos," in which he congratulated the English on the signs of divine grace visible in their nation, and the efforts they had made towards reconciliation with Catholicism. At the same time he appointed a commission to inquire into the validity of Anglican Orders. One of the Priests of the English Church, the Archbishop of York, made at the Congress of Norwich a speech in which he greeted with respect the voice from Rome, and regarded it as a duty to give a good reception to a letter so remarkably favorable in tone, and, in a certain sense, unique. He reminded his hearers that its author presided over a Church which had produced a multitude of martyrs, and set forth a noble army of martyrs, a Church to which they owed a vast treasury of theological literature; a Church from which the English had received in past ages, in times of weakness and misfortune, considerable and affectionate succor. Gladstone, in a public memorial proclaimed the necessity of union. He showed how Anglicans, by increasing resemblance on many points to the usages of the Church of Rome, were acknowledging the errors of the past. He spoke with deference of the Pope as the first Bishop of Christendom, and paid homage to the attitude Leo had assumed.

A few months later all these glorious visions abruptly vanished. The Papal Bull which definitely declared the invalidity of Orders conferred by the English hierarchy had already destroyed them, and the attempt to bridge the gulf between the Anglican and the Catholic Church failed for the time being. But the progress of

Catholic ideas in the Anglican Church will go on. In the meantime, the Catholic Church itself has made tremendous headway in England. In 1814 there were only 160,000 Catholics in England, and churches or chapels were few and hidden away in obscure corners of towns. Today in place of 160,000 there are nearly 2,000,000 Catholics in England alone, exclusive of Ireland and Scotland. The late Cardinal Vaughan gave the conversions at 600 a month, and these included the most intellectual classes. England has once more a great Catholic hierarchy, with religious Orders and priests in every center, while cathedrals, churches and convents rise in the midst of cities, and by their outward adornment proclaim on high the Faith of the faithful.—Truth.

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