

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

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

OUR GUARDIAN ANGELS

ST. CECILIA—NOVEMBER 22, 177 OR 230

"He hath given His angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways." (Ps. xci. 1)

Every child is taught that he has a Guardian Angel; all Catholics believe it, and no doubt most ordinary Catholics sometimes, if not daily, address a prayer to him. But is not this a very paltry recognition of the favor that God has bestowed on us, in appointing one of His blessed spirits to guide us and protect us? It requires faith for us to realize that though unseen, we each have an Angel, whom we should revere, and in whom we should trust. And according to the faith we have in his power manifested, the Angel is always ready and willing to assist us, but his aid should be invoked, and we should be ready on our part to obey his inspirations. When we remember that perhaps we have dallied with temptation, committed mortal sin, or even lived in sin, utterly regardless of the presence of our Angel, we see how dreadfully we have neglected the aids and safeguards given to our souls by God.

If the devotion of St. Cecilia, Virgin and Martyr, towards her Guardian Angel had been no more fervent than our own, she would not be the great Saint that she is, no church, no festival would keep her memory alive, no mention of blessed Cecilia in the Sacred Canon of every Mass that is offered up to God. Her Guardian was no more sympathetic nor powerful than our own, but his help was implored and his intervention confided in, and his love was shown in response to the love offered to him by his charge.

We rejoice to find such a proof of this devotion amongst the early Christians, and we reverently recognize the presence of their Angels as a source of so many martyrs' courage and constancy. Cecilia, a rich and noble lady in Rome, was forced to marry, although she had vowed her virginity to God, and Valerian, to whom she was given was a pagan. Not for one moment did she mean to violate her vow. She disclosed to Valerian the secret that her virginity was consecrated to God, and that she had an Angel to protect both her body and soul. With what unctious must she have addressed him, that heathen though he was, he was awed and humbly asked that he might see this Angel. Cecilia answered that his Angel would be vouchsafed to him. Her prayers had obtained for him the good disposition to believe, and she instructed him how to find Bishop Urban hiding in the Catacombs, who would teach him and baptize him. On returning after his baptism to seek Cecilia, full of the ardour of his new-found faith, he was rewarded and amazed at the vision which she had promised him. There was the Virgin absorbed in prayer, and by her side there was the Angel shining in his glory. Falling on his knees in deep emotion, he was consoled by the Angel blessing him as well as Cecilia, and promising them both a crown of glory.

Valerian could not restrain his ardour and his joy, but sought out his brother Tiburtius; and he, too, overcome by his pleadings, was baptized, and he likewise was granted the vision of the Angel. Their conversion became known, and shortly afterwards they were apprehended, and such was their fortitude and zeal, that Maximus, the officer in charge of them, was converted likewise, and all three lovingly offered the sacrifice of their lives to God. How wonderfully had Cecilia's Guardian Angel proved his power and his love, for the prayers she had offered and the confidence she had reposed in him, and he did not desert her now, when Cecilia had to face the fatal ordeal herself.

Foreknowing that her time was short, she distributed large sums to the poor, and was secretly visited by Urban the Bishop to prepare her for her death. The judge, deeming it best that her martyrdom should be as secret as possible, as she was so well known and popular and loved by the poor, condemned her to be put to death in her own house. He ordered her to be secured in the bathroom of her palace, and the furnace to be so heated that she should be suffocated. Cecilia was led to the room, fastened in and left there to die. But her Angel was with her, and though enclosed for a day and a night, she was unharmed, though so fierce was the heat that the steam scalded those who opened the doors. The judge, when informed of the marvel, sent an executioner to strike off her head. Three wounds did the axe inflict, but her head was not severed. Then she was left to die, as the law only allowed three strokes, and she lingered for two days, slowly dying, and a few of the faithful secretly gathered round her, and Urban the Bishop, once again. Her dying request was that the poor, whom she had always loved, were to be cared for, and her house to become a church for ever. Her prayer has been heard, for to this day a noble church stands where Cecilia died.

She had told Valerian that the Angel guarded her, body and soul. Has not her faith been rewarded and her words come true? Her soul was welcomed and safely homed in heaven when she died. And her body was found by Pops Pascal I. in 817 fresh and perfect as when it was laid in its cypress-wood coffin six

hundred years before. And again, in 1599, her marble monument was opened, and there were the precious veils that Pops Pascal had spread over her eight hundred years before, and these were withdrawn and the virgin body of the Saint was found lying in the very attitude in which she lay when she breathed her last. She lay clothed in the robes of golden lilies, with the marks of her blood still dimly showing. She looked like one asleep, graceful, and modest, and perfectly incorrupt. Truly for one thousand three hundred years had her Angel guarded that body of the pure and valiant Virgin-Martyr.

CARDINAL GIBBONS

FAVORS LEAGUE OR A FAMILY UNION OF PEOPLES (N. C. W. C. News Service)

Washington, D. C., Oct. 28.—Resumption of friendship with the people of Germany is the duty of Americans, Cardinal Gibbons declared in an interview given yesterday to Stephen Bonsal, a well known writer, and copyrighted by the Baltimore Sun.

Mr. Bonsal described to His Eminence political and industrial conditions in the former German Empire as he found them on a recent visit there, and spoke of the poverty and suffering in the industrial centers, such as Essen, Erfurt, in Frankfurt and throughout the Westphalian coal mining region.

DUTY TO RESUME TIES "Yes, that is what my German brethren write me," said Cardinal Gibbons. "These are almost the very words that the Archbishop of Breslau, in whose diocese Berlin is situated, uses in a recent letter to me, and this sad picture is confirmed by many statesmen, from German friends. On yes, I think it is our duty to pick up again the pre-war ties of friendship, many of which were and are most dear to me."

"My German brethren write very freely and I think very frankly about the present position of their unfortunate flocks. On many points they are unanimous in the expression of their views. They are glad that they have gotten rid of their Kaiser, their imperial army and all the apparatus of war that went with these things. They are profoundly grateful to us for having helped them so mightily to get rid of all these survivals of a darker age. "But they do not understand why we are so little cordial, so little helpful to that form of government which they have now constituted and which we said was the only kind of government with which we could treat and later on live on terms of peace and friendship. But, of course, I recognize that these are very delicate matters and what I am saying is not in approval or in disapproval of what has been done or of what may have been left undone: I am merely contributing this piece of information, this statement of the views of my German brethren which, so far as my information goes, are held by them unanimously and expressed without a dissenting voice."

His Eminence produced a copy of the Holy Father's recent encyclical on "The Christian Reconciliation of Peoples," and asked the interviewer to read the paragraphs in the course of which the Pope recommended that "all States putting aside mutual suspicions, should unite in one league or rather in a family of the peoples."

These urgent plans of the Holy Father, the Cardinal pronounced "noble words," adding: "I subscribe to them absolutely and without reserve as an American citizen and as a son of the Church—as well-nigh the oldest son of the Church."

In this creed of peace, and in the goal which, as God-fearing people we must attain, there is complete agreement, His Eminence said.

FAVORS DIFFERENT WORLD ARRANGEMENT

"Yes, I am in favor of very different world arrangements and of 'checks and balances,' to use the words of our political fathers, from those that made possible what happened in 1914. Do you recall how it came? There were a few letters from foreign ministers, half published, or not at all. A few telegrams exchanged between emperors and kings, and then rivers of blood began to flow to the Niagara of suffering at which we, dumbfounded and almost helpless, still assist. "What I most like and highly value about the proposed League is first the delay which it imposes upon any and all nations—you must not rush headlong into this thing in which we all run the risk of being involved."

This single new world regulation, the Cardinal declared, will reduce wars to a minimum. "And then I like and value that phrase and declaration, 'That it is the friendly right of each member of the League to bring to the attention of the assembly or of the council any circumstances whatever affecting international relations which threaten to disturb international peace or the good understanding between nations upon which peace depends.'"

In the next decade—better in the next ten months—I hope it will become the friendly right and the inevitable duty for all nations to combine for the preservation of peace. Many wars would have been avoided if there had been conformity

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to this plan and prescription, the Cardinal said.

"I like the plan for delay. I like the solemn agreement for the prevention of international war which the covenant stands for and of which the words you have just read, His Holiness, the Pope, expresses his warm approval."

AMERICA WILL MEET RESPONSIBILITIES

The world is weary and anxious, and millions of its inhabitants are in a desperate plight; delay is dangerous and means only cumulative suffering. His Eminence told the interviewer. The United States will at an early day accept its responsibilities in the world situation and at the same time make perfectly clear what they are, Cardinal Gibbons said.

"Once our responsibility is clearly established and made undeniably manifest, the American people will not sidestep. We will do our duty," he continued.

"These are solemn duties and far-reaching responsibilities that are imposed by the new procedure. His Eminence pointed out.

"These duties and obligations should be carefully examined and weighed and enlightened by wise counsel, especially from and by those who, under our Constitution, are held responsible for their adoption."

PRESIDENT MILLERAND

FIRST TO PROPOSE RESUMPTION OF VATICAN RELATIONS

(By N. C. W. C. News Service)

Rome, Sept. 24.—Following is the text of the message sent by Pope Benedict to President Millerand of France, congratulating him on his election:

"On this day, when Your Excellency is raised by the hearty suffrage of the French to the first Magistracy of the Republic, it is with deep gratification that we express to you our warm congratulations and best wishes."

"The eminent services already rendered by Your Excellency in the work of rehabilitation of your noble country are for us an earnest that the great mission so wisely intimated by your illustrious predecessor will be continued with all the constancy and enlightened devotedness which have always inspired Your Excellency's patriotic action."

"In this trust, Mr. President, we implore with our whole heart the divine blessing upon yourself, your family, the French Government and the whole nation."

"BENEDICTUS P. P. XV." Paris, Oct. 6.—No uncertainty whatever is felt in Catholic circles as a result of M. Millerand's election to the Presidency of the French Republic. With the single exception of two royalist congressmen, who always have been known to be firmly opposed to the very republican system, all the Catholic deputies at Versailles cast their votes for M. Millerand.

FOUGHT BY EXTREMISTS

The very fact that the newly-elected President was expected to carry the votes of the Catholic "moderate," "center" and "right" parties, was deemed by the Senators and Deputies who belong to the "left" party sufficient reason to fight M. Millerand's nomination. They upbraided M. Millerand for failing to follow the policy of the party to which he belonged some twenty years ago, when he was a member of M. Waldeck-Rousseau's Cabinet, which expelled congregations from France.

Certain it is that M. Millerand has greatly modified his attitude since that time. As the common saying goes, he has "put much water in his wine." After realizing all the inconvenience and drawbacks of the anti-religious policy, M. Millerand, from the very first day he was selected Premier, has endeavored to make up for former mistakes.

As Minister of the War, he is to be credited with the reinstatement of chaplains in the army.

In his platform of November 7 last, he plainly stated that: "the first call of France, the expelled congregations have flocked back to offer their lives in safeguarding the attacked Fatherland. Is a single Frenchman to be found, today, who shall dare ask that those among them who were not killed on the battlefield, be driven across the frontier?"

FAVORED VATICAN RELATIONS

As Prime Minister, M. Millerand was the first to propose the resumption of relations with the Holy See.

Without waiting for the final vote on the re-establishment of the Embassy, he sent an extraordinary mission to the Vatican on the occasion of the St. Joan of Arc canonization. His sympathy for the Catholics was equally shown in the way he received and honored the Knights of Columbus. One more proof of his great regard for the Catholics is his bestowal of the Cross of the Legion of Honor on Monsignor Baudissart, rector of the Catholic University and President of the Committee of "Amitie Catholiques."

Three weeks ago, after the death of Cardinal Amette, M. Millerand called personally on the Auxiliary Bishop, Monsignor Roland Gosselin, and attended the funeral service in Notre Dame.

On the following day he made it his duty as head of the French Government, to attend at the solemn Mass celebrating the feast of the Assumption in commemoration of the battle of the Marne. He did not think himself, as his predecessors did, bound by the neutrality of the State.

HIS GRACIOUS SUGGESTION AT MEAUX

Until this year there used to be at the Meaux celebration a banquet at the Bishop's palace and one at the Town Hall. M. Millerand expressed to the Bishop of Meaux his desire to see the Bishop sit side by side with the cabinet officers and the prefect. Henceforth this ceremonial will be followed.

M. Millerand, in the course of his recent visit to Alsace Lorraine, gave a formal pledge to see that all the religious liberties of the two provinces be fully respected.

The strong opposition of the anti-clerical radicals against M. Miller-

and's nomination is calculated to strengthen the ties that bind the new President of the Republic to the Catholics. Moreover, the complete failure of that opposition is proof of the defeat of the anti-clerical parties in France.

The blighting curse of the present age is the total absence of serious thought of the great Hereafter. Intellectual training makes men timid, for the more we know the less satisfied we are without knowledge.—Culture is cowardly.—Donna Platt.

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