

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. M. BOSSAERT

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

"A LITTLE WHILE,"—A WORD OF WARNING

A little while! Everything existing, living and happening in the world is only for a little while; everything on earth lasts but a little while, and then is over. How quickly do the charms of childhood and the vigor of youth pass away! How long will it be before we reach the end of our pilgrimage, and wonder that the days and years have sped so quickly? Our Saviour's words: "A little while," contains a warning for us all.

1. They warn the happy and prosperous against recklessness and arrogance. Prosperity often makes us careless, and success leads many astray. We find instances of this in our daily life, and we frequently meet people who suffer in mind and body for having spent the days of their youth in folly and frivolity. Others, who once were respected and well to do, have fallen into poverty and degradation, because in their prosperity they forgot God and gave way to arrogance. There would be fewer sufferers of this kind, if people bore in mind how quickly a change may come, and how in a little while their surroundings may be completely altered.

Therefore you who are prosperous and happy, beware! In a little while the sun of your happiness may sink behind black clouds, and the sky may grow gloomy and overcast. Listen and take this warning to heart whilst you are young. Your hearts are still free from anxiety and full of happiness, and no sorrow seems to await you in the future. Be wise and prudent, and on your guard against recklessness. Say to yourselves: "In a little while the joyful time of youth will be over, and we shall have to face the serious days of life; as we sow now, we shall reap hereafter. God, to whom I will dedicate my life; I will be glad indeed, but I will avoid all carelessness." In this way you will lay the sure foundation of happiness in time and in eternity. You rich men, who possess temporal goods in abundance, be humble and prudent, for in a little while the hour will come when you will have to leave all your wealth and possessions; in a little while some unfortunate accident or unexpected event may reduce you to poverty. Let none of us be dazzled by worldly prosperity, but let each be humble and modest, even if success falls to his lot, for everything comes to us from God's fatherly hand; it is God who gave, and He can also take away. Let us never reckon upon prosperity, for "the world passeth away and the concupiscence thereof," but let us do that the Will of God abide for ever.

2. The words, "a little while," warn sinners against putting off their repentance. Many Christians are much more careful about the worldly business than about the welfare of their souls. If they are threatened with some illness, they at once try every means of arresting the malady, fearing lest it should prove incurable. They act in a prudent and Christian manner. But it stands to reason that they ought not to be less careful to check diseases of the soul, for what does it avail a man to possess all else, if he suffer the loss of his soul? Yet there is nothing to which men are more indifferent than to the health of their souls. Many are for years the slaves of some disastrous passion, and allow all the opportunities of improvement, given them by God, to pass unnoticed. Many grow up in a state of sin, and go on sinning, without repenting of their past and regarding it as quite unimportant. Nothing is more dangerous than to put off repentance. We may ask one who does this: "How can you justify your delay? You think probably that you will have plenty of time, but in a little while the hour will come for you to pass into eternity; then your eyes will be opened, and you will see what you have done, and feel the bitter pangs of remorse. In a little while you will stand before your Judge, who will take account of your sins, because you neglect to do so now in this life. He will count up the hours and days given you for repentance and amendment; He will remind you of your wasted opportunities. Yes, in a little while the time of grace will be over, the measure of your iniquity will be full, and the hour of punishment will begin. Will you any longer risk eternal damnation by continuing to walk in the way of the impatient? "Today if you shall hear His Voice, harden not your hearts!"

A LESSON

If, when kneeling in adoration of the Precious Heart of Love, the eye chances to glance at the waxen taper glowing within its crimson receptacle, a lesson of all the most important will, after a little reflection, be carried into the soul. Once lighted—its tiny, steady flame undisturbed by the bustle of the busy hours of the day, undimmed by the mysterious silence of the hours of night—consumes itself and is consumed in honor of the hidden God whose Presence it indicates. May we not learn from the consideration of this waxen taper glowing in the lamp, that it is in like manner

our duty, as it should be considered our privilege, to spend ourselves and be spent in honor of this same God who is our Creator also?—Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.

CHRISTIANITY AND SPIRITISM

By Right Reverend Monsignor Francis C. Kelley, D. D.

That God is a pure spirit, eternal, omnipotent and perfect, truth itself, power itself, wisdom itself, limited only by the fact that He cannot be anything but perfection, seems to be lost sight of by those who look upon Spiritism as a new revelation. Imperfection cannot exist in God—whatever that imperfection be; a tolerance of error, sin, or even of what is incompatible with His dignity, power, intelligence and love. God must, by the nature of His being, repel whatever is contrary to His nature. He must love truth and virtue with an eternal love. Postulante anything else of Him and the idea of God is destroyed.

Man's relation to God is that of created and limited intelligence to uncreated and unlimited intelligence, but also that of spiritual and material being to eternal and omnipotent being. Man's destiny is God. He reaches God by correspondence with His grace and gifts, which give man, even on earth, a resemblance to the Divine. To these graces and gifts, God has given man some knowledge of Himself—a knowledge sufficient to his need of reaching Him. Part of this knowledge is expressed in natural religion, but the sanctity of it is in Christianity, which is His Revelation, divine sent Truth, because it comes from Truth Eternal. No lie can emanate from Eternal Truth without destroying Eternal Truth—an impossible thing.

Spiritism, to be a new revelation, should then bear the marks and signs of Truth, even as did the Revelation through Christ. The old revelation was clear, lucid, unvarying and authoritative. He that hears you despise Me. He that despises you despises Me, and he that despises Me despises Him that sent Me." He who believeth in Me hath everlasting life." "Teach all things whatsoever I have commanded." He that is not with Me is against Me, he that gathereth not with Me scattereth." "It hath been said of old . . . but I say." The "new revelation" comes to us through thousands of different people, but with only one message upon which they all agree: that Christ was not divine, and therefore, that the Eternal Truth lent His aid through the gifts of prophecy and miracle, to fasten a lie upon the world. This is a challenge to the religion of civilization; so Christians have at least the right to ask for the same proofs of the truth of this so-called revelation that were given by Christ for His. What does Spiritism offer?

It offers nothing for the alleged word of Eternal Omnipotence like in dignity to anything spoken by even the forerunners of Christ. It has had no prophets, I can appeal to no written word to uphold the promise of its coming. Every similarity to its phenomena has been condemned in the past by the Christ it hails as the "greatest of mediums," and by His accredited teachers. Its messages from the other world are a jumble of contradictions, of falsehoods. Its teachers are not men of known or recognized sanctity of life. Its miracles are jumping tables, undignified buffoonery, trivial messages, bell ringing, trances that sap vitality, and materializations known to be taken from the living body of the medium. What similarity is there here with the words and words of Jesus Christ? What God is this who is less serious and godlike than a creature? Has the Omnipotent stepped onto the world's vaudeville stage to entertain His creatures with antics unworthy of a court jester of the Middle Ages?

The result of Christ's teaching on the world was a world redeemed. Its result on the individual is a deepening of spiritual life, repose of soul, hatred of evil, purity of heart, cleanliness of mind. The result of Spiritism is told by a long list of mental disorders, moral degeneracy and physical decay. Read what the Spiritists themselves say of these results: "It is infinitely to be regretted that we cannot trust the mediums. They almost all cheat." This is the testimony of Flammarion, himself a Spirit. Who dreams of saying this of the Apostles of Christ? Conan Doyle asks for "the training and segregation of mediums." Christ trained His own Apostles and sent them out into "all the world." Sir William Crookes told of the famous D. D. Home "lying pale, speechless and almost fainting on the floor after a seance." Dr. Hereward Carrington, one of the greatest students of the subject, says: "I doubt not that hundreds of persons become insane every year by reason of these experiments with the planchette board."

The board sworn on occasions was extraordinary, and, on several occasions, it called Mrs. C. and other names which they had never heard till they saw them spelled out on paper, and all of such a nature that I cannot give them here." Imagine an Apostle doing this! "I have," said Sir William Barrett, "observed the steady downward course of all mediums who sit regularly." Mr. Lillie in Modern Mystics and Modern Magic writes: "Often and often Mr. Stanton Moses thought his guides devils from Hell." Mr. Lillie received his information from Mr.

Moses himself. Space forbids adding to these quotations, but there is a touch of local color in mentioning that Dr. Hickson, head of the Chicago Psychopathic Laboratory, has testified in public print that already his institution is receiving seance habitues and ouija board experts. If my memory serve me right, we had a similar testimony recently from the superintendent of a western lunatic asylum.

A revelation is supposed to add to the sum of human knowledge. The old Revelation did. What has the new revelation offered? Only one definite teaching: That Christ was not what He claimed to be. On all other points there is nothing but confusion. But because of this one definite offering, the doctrine of the Atonement is to be swept away. The Resurrection, by which Christianity stands or falls, is explained spiritistically and is to be considered no actual Resurrection as Christ proved to St. Thomas. Where was the Eternal Truth for the last two thousand years of progress? Truth does not change with time. It only unfolds as a flower. But has ever yet a rose unfolded into a poison blossom? What has the new revelation added even to that store of human knowledge for which no particular revelation was necessary at all? The spirits show great interest in the numbers on guns in photographs, in where Mary left the key to the safe, in love spats, in prospective husbands; but they seem to possess little desire to assist us in anything that interests us in the development of learning, of arts and of sciences. The first necessity in dealing with them is to give up our own liberty. Absolute passivity is the open door by which they enter. We know how to open the door, but who will close it? Has God ever asked us to abdicate our gift of free will? Has any Apostle intimated, as did Sir Oliver Lodge, that the weak-minded should not meddle with what, if it is good, belongs by right to every son of God?

Speaking of Spiritism as a religion which is the manifestation which I am discussing, it is the religion of the weak, not of the strong; the faith of the credulous, not that of those who "test the Spirit" by the laws of God; the hope of the sinner, not that of the saint; the charity of the worldly, not that which is united to Eternal Love. Spiritistic religion clings to earth. The Christian paradise of union with Eternal Love, Eternal Truth and Eternal Virtue we are asked to trade for "a life very much like this one," and, as if this were not bad enough, now comes "Raymond" to add a smoking room and a whisky shop to the hopelessness of it all.

The first great movement against Christ after the early persecutions was that led by Julian the Apostate. His religion was supposed to be a species of Neo-Platonism. But what was it in reality? Maxima of Ephesus, who was responsible for Julian's desertion of Christianity, had a philosophy that was a jumble, a meaningless ceremonial and a strong foundation of magic. It was Spiritism. Its gods were Evil Spirits. It had its "materializations and its oracles." (Vide the Emperor Julian's letters). Examine it in the light of Doyle's "New Revelation" and see that even their Spiritism was old. Its roots were even their deeper down than Chaldean and Persian.

Is it necessary to say that a religion such as this cannot be from the God of the Christians? If not from Him, the words of Holy Scripture tell us from whom it comes: "He who is not with Me is against Me; He who gathereth not with Me scattereth."—New World.

"WEARING THY STEPS"

The Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament

How careful we are to observe the courtesies of life! How uneasy till such social duties are discharged! In the making and returning of calls, how rigidly if hindered, how sensible, that delay demands apology!

And this where mere acquaintances are concerned. But what then when there is question of a friend, a benefactor, one devoted to us and our interests? If formal visits are here uncalculated for, it is only because our hearts need no prompting. Uninvited, inconsiderately often, we come and go, "wearing the steps of His doors."

And our best of friends—do we treat Him thus?—as affectionately, as familiarly? If not, why not? Is He not among the benefactors whose gifts deserve thanks, the friends whose feelings have to be considered, the acquaintances, at least, whose attentions must be acknowledged? Is it because he puts himself so completely at our disposal that He is to be neglected? Or because He is King of kings that He is to be considered outside the circle whose courtesy is exacted?

Ah, Lord, how unmindful we are of what is due to You! How unmindful I am of Your unflinching devotedness to me! Sent into this world as into a strange neighborhood I found myself welcome to receive me, to make me welcome, to offer Your services, to show me all manner of graceful kindness. You have thrown open Your house to me. You invite me to Your table. You press upon me Your gifts: "All ye that thirst come to the waters. . . Come buy wine and milk without money, and without any price." "Come to Me and I will refresh you." "Him that cometh to Me, I will not cast out." You make use of every motive to draw me to

yourself yet have to complain after: "You will not come to Me that you may have life."

Thus it was long ago; thus it is now. We have times for other duties—for our correspondence, our shopping, our afternoon calls on other more favored friends, but no time for a visit to Him. Is it so far then to the nearest church? So far that He will accept the distance as sufficient reason for our absence, except at times when attendance is of obligation? Can I urge home duties and necessary occupations, when I see who those are that can and do find time to visit Him?

O my Lord, why these wretched subtleties with You, "the God of Truth"? Why not fall at Your feet and own that it is not distance, not lack of leisure, nor any reasonable plea that keeps me from You, but simply and solely the want of love? It is the reason I could not give to any other friend. I should have to find some other pretext with which to color my neglect. But with You there need be no dissembling. Your friendship stands alone in the perfect frankness and confidence permissible on both sides. We may own to being cold and half-unwilling visitors, yet we are not for that unwelcome. The petulance, the selfishness, the waywardness of our moods that in the very interest of their friendships call for self-restraint, many show themselves in all their ugliness before the all-plying, the Friend "more friendly than a brother," whom nothing can shock, disgust, estrange.

He wants our intercourse with Him to be perfectly free; nothing studied, nothing strained. He desires to have us as we are, no less than as we could be. He wants to be taken into our confidence, to be let into the secret chambers of our souls, into which we only peep ourselves at stated times and with half-averted glance. He would share in the interests and troubles of the moment, be called upon for sympathy in every event great or small that interrupts the even flow of our home life or of our inner life; take part in every experience whether of sorrow or of joy. The soldier off to the front, the baby with its broken toy, the girl with her first secret, no less than the wife, the mother, the priest with their burdened hearts—He wants them all. He sees us going off here and there for help and comfort and counsel. He hears our feet as they hurry past His door to wear the doorsteps of other friends, and He calls to us in those tones divine in their tenderness of reproach: "You will not come to Me. My people have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living water, and have dug to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."

How long, O Lord, how long? When shall we wake up to the reality of Your Presence in our midst, and to the purpose of that Presence? We would die for it if it need be, and yet we heed it not. Shall I wait till it is brought home to me by the remorse of my last hour, or by the long, long hours of purgatory? Oh, why did I not make use of my Emmanuel, my God with me, whilst I had time, "whilst He was in the way with me?" Why during my dream-life down there did I not realize the need of Him that is the one need in this real life of eternity?

A child as Catechism said: "Won't it be dreadful for those who don't believe in the Real Presence to find at judgment that it was real, that our Lord was there after all! Even if they didn't know any better, and so it was not their fault, and our Lord is not angry with them—I think they will be so dreadfully sorry all the same."

But if these will be sorry, what will be the case of those who did know and neglected Him. Those to whom He will say, "So long a time I have been with you, and you have not known Me!"

Lord Jesus, let not that be my bitterest thought in purgatory, that land of bitter thoughts. It is time that Your love should be returned, that I should make amends for the past, that I should hasten to You with my sorrow and my love.

Go to Him early in the morning. Is daily Mass an impossibility in my case? He waits for me there, to offer for me and with me, His sacrifice and mine for the interests we share together.

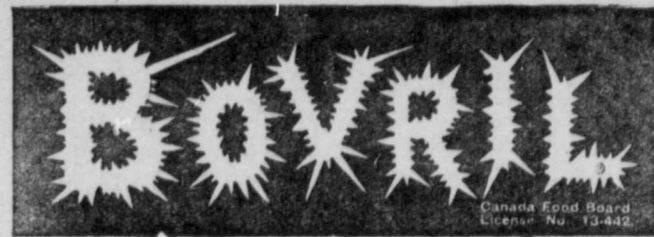
And let thy feet wear the steps of His doors, more especially in the afternoon or evening when the church is quiet and He is left all alone. With a little good will and ingenuity could I not include a visit to Him in my weekly, if not in my daily programme? Could I not so arrange my calls to other friends as to leave a few moments for my dearest and best? How blessed a remembrance when He is brought to my doors at the last, to be my viaticum, that in life I was faithful to the duties of friendship and wore the steps of His doors!

O blessed, self-sufficing God Athirst for me. Coming a beggar to my door. All sufficiently. Craving with meek persistence alms of my poor heart.

A thought, a word of sympathy—how sweet! How sweet Thou art! And sweetest Thou knock and ever knock.

Till life is flown Seeking vain entrance to a heart That is Thine own? Or wilt thou rather work this hour Such change in me That hither I may come "wearing Thy steps" Athirst for Thee!

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