

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

REV. F. P. HICKEY, O. S. B.
SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST

THE HOLINESS OF THE CHURCH

"A glorious Church, . . . holy and without blemish." (Eph. v. 27.)
The second mark of the Church of Christ is its Holiness. And this character it has derived from its Founder; has perpetuated by the means of being holy, with which He endowed it; and this mark is its glory, witnessed to and proved by the sanctity of the lives of so many, who have been steadfast to its faith and doctrine.

The Founder of the Church is none other than God made man, Christ Jesus our Lord. He, before Whom the four living creatures, resting not day or night, exclaim: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty." (Apoc. iv. 8.) He is the Founder of the Church, and His merciful object in founding it was to make it holy, and endow it with the means of making the souls of men holy, sanctifying and saving them.

Yes, men say, He did that when He redeemed us, and blotted out the handwriting against us. What need, then, of the Church?

The mission and work of the Church is to apply the effects of the Redemption to the souls of men. If this continued application were not necessary, why did its Divine Founder not only redeem by His Death, but perpetuate His Redemption, by instituting the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass? And saying, "Do this in commemoration of Me," did He not bequeath it to the Church as the great means of holiness?

Yes, my dear brethren, in our Church, the home of our souls, there is every means and requisite to make us holy, and their efficacy is derived from the Precious Blood of Christ. These means are the Sacraments of the Church.

The little child is brought to the font; the waters of baptism wash away original sin, and at once it is a child of God, signed and sealed heir to the Kingdom of God. It is made holy. Later on the stripping and the maiden are anointed with chrism in confirmation to strengthen them and keep them holy. And through life, how many times—seven times, or "seventy times seven times" (Matt. xviii. 22) as our Lord said, does the poor sinner, who has fallen, come to the sacrament of penance? He is there forgiven, his soul is cleansed by the power of the Precious Blood, he is made holy once again.

And, day by day, the Holy Mass is offered up, the bread and wine changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. This is the holiest doctrine and the holiest practice in the Church of God. What sanctified the souls of men? The sacrifice of the cross. What continues, then, to sanctify them but that same Sacrifice, the Holy Mass, which, as the Catechism teaches us, "is one and the same Sacrifice as that of the cross, inasmuch as Christ, Who offered Himself, a bleeding victim, on the cross to His Heavenly Father, continues to offer Himself in an unbloody manner on the Altar, through the ministry of priests." And at the Mass, the faithful can communicate, can purify and fortify their souls, by receiving the Body and blood of Jesus Christ. This is "the memorial of His wonderful works," (Ps. cx. 4.) the Almighty's highest effort to make us holy.

This, then, is the work of holy Church. Who are we to talk of being redeemed once? Are we so innocent and holy throughout life? Do we never fall into sin? Have we never been unfaithful to God? "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John i. 8.) So the work of the Church is to watch over us, care for us, cleanse and nourish our souls, as a mother does her child. Our holy Mother the Church we call her. We understand about our bodies, that they must be fed and clothed, and diseases checked and weaknesses strengthened, not once, but continually all through life. But our soul! Oh, it was redeemed once, what matter how foul a life we have led since, no matter the vile habits we have fallen into, no matter the burden of grave and awful sins dragging us to destruction!

The Church would have failed in its holy mission, if it allowed its children to live like this. To make us holy is its work. It has every means necessary from the hand of God, its Founder, and as long as the world shall last, it will be found ministering to the souls of men.

The Church holy yes, in its Founder, and in the means of holiness bestowed upon it. But look around, see the number of careless, indifferent, even bad Catholics, and how can one say the Church is holy? By its children let it be known.

My dear brethren, do not be misled by talk like this. Yes, there are bad Catholics, and they are bad, just because they neglect the means of holiness so kindly offered them by the Church. It is not the Church that has made them bad, but their own wilful disobedience to the Church, neglecting the holy Sacraments, despising the Presence of their Lord upon the Altar that has made them what they are. But even for them there is holiness in the Church, if they will return to it repentant prodigals.

But their bad example is far more than atoned for by the holy lives of the subjects of the Church, who in all ages and in all lands have been devout, obedient, and loyal to the

Faith. Even now, how many throughout the world are leading careful, faithful lives, using the means of holiness afforded them by the Church. And it is not a weary, lonely life that they are leading. They are working before the eyes of God. They know that He reads their hearts, and sees their patience, and their love, and their pure intention, doing all for Him. To the world they seem the same as others: before Heaven they are the holy ones of God. And their hope and courage are buoyed up by looking at the example of the Saints who have gone before them. The Saints, the heroic men and women, who have been witnesses, in every age and in every country, to the holiness of the Church, whose children they were. And if their lives reflect the holiness of the Church and give glory to it; remember to each one of us the same Church offers the same means of holiness. To use those means and become holy, or to neglect those means and be lost, depends upon ourselves. We have free will, we can choose for ourselves.

Prayer, after the Sacraments, is the great means of holiness. Let us pray, then, pray daily, pray earnestly for a good will to use all these means with such diligence and perseverance that we may become holy children of the Church, that "glorious Church . . . holy and without blemish."

TEMPERANCE

THE POPULAR MARCH AGAINST THE SALOON

A Springfield business man whose duties carry him to all the principal centers of the Northwest, West and South has been powerfully impressed with the growth of temperance sentiment and action. Year by year he has seen the dissatisfaction with the saloon as a community asset steadily enlarging until results have been achieved that command the attention of the country. This change has not been emotional on the lines which begot the Washingtonian movement of long ago and inspired the oratory of John B. Gough and his successors, but has had its origin and strength in practical business considerations. As an economic factor the saloon is being recognized as an undesirable element which does not contribute anything of advantage to the common cause.

The oratory of prohibitionists has played small part in this change of opinion. The local traveler found that the economic factor had taken hold of the minds of leading citizens of localities visited who were pushing against the saloon because of their belief that their city or State would be better off without it. Long ago railroads and other employers of labor began to put the ban upon employees who indulged in liquor. Now this public recognition that it impaired efficiency has helped to impress the general thinking. Indeed, our traveler reports that for a long time back the saloon issue has been quite at the front in the talk of his customers. It was always introduced before his visits ended. This helped to establish in his mind the fact that a social change was in progress, whose results have been placed in large evidence on the map of the United States. The contrast between the trend of opinion and the pioneer days of the West is very striking, of course. The period of the "bad man" who shoots up towns has gone into history.

Another phase of the situation has impressed this man in his first-hand contact with this period of transition as it relates to the saloon. The trouble which Baltimore has experienced through an influx of undesirable citizens who left Virginia because it has gone into the column of dry States, he has heard of elsewhere. Where the local sentiment against the saloon is strong enough to command the enforcement of the law, it has followed that men and women accustomed to its ministrations do not care to stay, and in due course a considerable portion of them move on to some locality where the saloon flourishes. This is obviously to the advantage of the place of exodus and undesirable for the places to which these people go. If that which has occurred in Virginia has been duplicated in anything like the same degree elsewhere, there must have been a great shifting of undesirable to the cities which remain wet. The first effect of such an influx, as in the case of Baltimore, has been the need for greater vigilance on the part of police departments. — Springfield Republican.

DON'T BUY BY THE COVER

"Writing of Catholic publications and Catholic reading we are reminded of the fact that the Catholic public is often really victimized in this very matter," says the Catholic Universe. "Books are made up out of old materials, a few facts are added on cognate subjects of present interest, the volume is handsomely bound, and an agent goes about the country selling the book, receiving payments in installments and making 60% on his sales. Such books, containing a table and a little read; an incense of installments is laid on the buyer; he pays twice as much as ought to be asked for the book and the sale of really valuable and much cheaper books is prevented. We have seen handsomely bound Bibles bought for fifteen dollars and twenty dollars, and solely used for an ornament, by poor people who could

surely have made much better investment in reading matter. What we say of Bibles may be said equally of certain ponderous volumes containing the life of the Blessed Virgin, etc. Of course these are grandly useful books in themselves but when so gotten up as to be unavailable except for ornament, and when creating an obstacle to the purchase of books more easily and more generally read, they do not serve Catholic interests."

SCANDALIZING THE LITTLE ONES

"Why are you priests so insistent," an anonymous correspondent recently inquired, "on keeping Catholic children in Catholic schools? I am a devout Catholic myself, but like many other good Catholics, send my children without scruple to non-Catholic schools." The "devout Catholic," figuring occasionally in our newspapers, is a being curiously and fearfully mad. As a rule, he is in a state of chronic revolt against the Church. He adopts the singular policy of proving his devotion to the Faith by slandering its official teachers, or by doing his puny best to tear down what the Church builds up. Generally he possesses an abysmal ignorance of Catholic belief and practice; much of his correspondence he concludes with his self-assigned title, suppressing for reasons of humility, his illustrious name. Sometimes he masquerades as a "broadminded Catholic" or an "educated Catholic," realizing no doubt, the serious need of somehow proving the breadth of his intellect and the general tremendousness of his mental equipment.

CATHOLICS REAL AND FICTITIOUS But my anonymous correspondent is in error in believing that good Catholics entrust their children, by choice, to non-Catholic schools. In the absence of extenuating circumstances, of which the Church is the proper judge, parents who send their children to non-Catholic schools are, by the very fact, not good Catholics, but disloyal and disobedient Catholics. "Good" Catholics make every effort to "think with the Church," and according to the Church's thinking, expressed, for instance, in the Baltimore Decrees, and in countless episcopal pastorals, the only safe place for the education of the Catholic child is the Catholic school. "Good" Catholics gladly sacrifice many things, their real necessities at times, to safeguard their children against the perils to faith and morals so common in a society which is fast persuading itself that it can get along better without God than with God. They know that this necessary training can be had, ordinarily speaking, only in a Catholic school. They also know that an account of the care they have given their children will be exacted before the judgment seat of God. Therefore they gladly choose the Catholic school for their children. These parents are in truth "devout Catholics"; our anonymous correspondents obviously have no claim to the title. German silver is not silver and fool's gold is not gold. Neither are they even passable Catholics who condemn their children to non-Catholic schools, when they might easily place them in institutions where the name of Jesus Christ is revered, and not, as in the secular school, forbidden.

THE WORDS OF CHRIST

In many cases, moreover, if not in all, they may be thought of the objects of one of the most terrible maledictions uttered by the lips of the Saviour of mankind. He said of Judas, that it were better he had never been born; for those who place the little ones of His flock in the occasions of evil, He reserves a punishment compared with which the death of the body is as nothing. "And Jesus calling unto him a little child, set him in the midst of them, and said: 'he that shall receive one such little child in My Name receiveth Me. But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea.'"

Does this condemnation apply to parents who freely send their children to schools not conducted in His name, schools in which God has no part?

THE DUTY OF PARENTS

By the law of nature, parents are strictly bound to care for their children. This obligation is by no means fulfilled by providing for the child's physical and mental welfare. Entrusted by the Almighty Creator to the guardianship of father and mother, the child is no mere entity of time, capable of mental and physical development within certain limits, but a being truly made to the image of God. He has an immortal soul essentially differentiating him from the brute beast; his destiny reaches far beyond the narrow bounds of time and space. He comes from the hand of God; he must, after the period of his earthly existence, go back to God, to live through an eternity of happiness or pain. The choice between good and evil is within the power of his free will, cooperating with the grace of God, but the line of his choice is deeply influenced by his early environment and training. In the intention of the Church, every home should, therefore, be a sanctuary, and every father and mother a minister of grace, turning the unfolding mind of the child to thoughts of its eternal destiny.

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DELEGATING THIS DUTY

In the present constitution of society, this priestly office is delegated in part to the school. For the time being the instructor shares the duty and the authority of father and mother. Parents, therefore, are strictly bound in conscience not to delegate any part of their duty or authority to any who are either unable or unwilling to watch over the spiritual as well as the physical and mental welfare of their children. If parents are careless or indifferent in sharing an authority which by the law of nature belongs primarily to them, not to the State, they fail grievously in their duty to their children. It is clear then, that except for grave reasons, approved by the proper ecclesiastical authority, a Catholic parent may not give the child into the keeping of teachers who are obliged by law to exclude even the most casual instruction in supernatural religion. "Their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father," said Our Lord of the children He had gathered about Him. But the secular school, unconcerned with life's most important interests, has nothing to teach the neglected child of the angels, of God, its last end, of Heaven. For "secularized" education, narrow in concept and in its practical, knows nothing of these things, except, perhaps, that they are "sectarian teachings," to be avoided in the class room quite as carefully as profane language.

THE CHILD AND THE FAILURE

The enemies of religion understand the importance of the receptive, impressionable years of childhood far better than many a Catholic parent. In himself small and feeble, as Pere Garand remarks, the child "is destined to be all. He is the future. He is the family, society, the Church." And it is equally true that the child of to-day may be the out-cast of the next generation, a wrecker of all family ideals, a fanatic with hands impotently raised against the Church of God. Our enemies realize, and act upon their realization, that in securing the child, they secure the future. It is this reason precisely which has dictated the complete secularization of education in France, and which through the indifference of the American public, nominally Christian, bids fair to encompass a like result in our own country.

"SECULARIZING" EDUCATION

"Secularization" is the word of the hour. We have secular education, secular charity, secular churches, and a secular State. Small wonder, then, that we also live in a society, worldly in the Scriptural sense, a society that finds God an unpleasant memory or a curious myth, and deems His commandments an unwarranted restriction upon the freedom of the individual to work out his own destiny. This is the world which our children must soon face. Are we preparing them to pass through it unscathed, by entrusting them to schools whose highest religious effort is the furtive admission that any religion is good if one finds it helpful? Plainly, this miserable principle means the substitution of a primitive form of pragmatism for the acceptance, binding on every human creature, of a supernatural revelation. Can the Catholic parent who freely subjects his child to schools ruled by this base spirit, escape before the judgment seat of God, the condemnation of those who "scandalize the little ones that believe in me?" — Paul L. Blakely, S. J., in America.

COMING "TO THEIR OWN AGAIN"

Dr. Arthur Anderson Martin, a Protestant physician from New Zealand who joined the first British Expeditionary Force, tells in his interesting war-book, entitled "A Surgeon in Khaki," how the Sisters of France have "come to their own again," and pays the following enthusiastic tribute to their efficiency and devotion: "The nuns at this hospital [Bethune] were simply splendid all through, and I can quite understand how the religious Sisters have come to their own again in France. From the earliest times and up till about eight years ago all the nursing in the French hospitals was done by Sisters belonging to the various Religious Orders. Then came one of the big political upheavals for which France has been so noted in the past, and the nursing Sisters gradually disappeared from the hospitals, owing to the hostility of the State to the Church and all connected with it. The nursing Sisters of these Orders were at the time of this change well-trained medical and surgical nurses. As they were no longer able to exercise their professional skill, and no more of the younger nuns were

trained in nursing, it followed that on the outbreak of War only the older nuns were capable of undertaking skilled nursing in the many hospitals. The demand for nurses was a clamant one, for there were the beginning of the War there were large casualties. It was said that the nursing by the lay sisters who succeeded the religious Sisters was not of such a high order as in the old days owing to the absence of the strict and rigid discipline, the very fiber of the life of a Sister in religion. I have heard this both from French surgeons and from visiting British surgeons. . . . It was at this critical phase that the Franciscan Sisters, and the Sisters of other Religious Orders, quietly took their places beside the wounded French soldiers. Just as quietly they opened up their convents, churches, and buildings, warehouses, chateaux, cottages, railway waiting-rooms, and turned them into hospitals for the wounded and sick men. Working tirelessly night and day, knowing no fatigue and shrinking from no task or danger, and glorying in their mission, they performed marvels. The younger Sisters were put to subordinate nursing duties, and so rigorously trained by the elder ones in the principles of nursing. . . . I do not think that any future government of France will ever dare to oust the religious Sisters from the hospitals. These quiet-voiced, simple-robed women, carrying help and compassionate pity in the welter of blood and slaughter, have come 'to their own' again."

The "lay sisters" Dr. Martin speaks of were the secular nurses, it should be explained, who took the place of the banished religious, but whose professional skill was not found to be of such a "high order" as was that of the Sisters they supplanted. To the thoughtful Catholic, however, there is nothing particularly remarkable in the spectacle that so impressed the "Surgeon in Khaki." For those noble French Sisters are simply doing now what the Church has been doing all through her history. The gift of irresistible energy and resourcefulness is hers, and nothing can keep her from exercising the Divine mission of teaching, healing and reconciling. If the Church's enemies refuse to let her undertake this work or that, she will meekly turn to another. If she is driven out of a country, she stands just beyond the frontier, and seizes the first opportunity to return and minister to the dire needs of those who banished her. If the Church is not allowed to teach, she will nurse the sick. If she is not permitted to preach to Catholics, she goes forth to evangelize the heathen. The Catholic Church is the only institution in the world that can always afford to bide her time and be patient, for against her, according to the Divine promise, the gates of hell shall not prevail. Not only in France but everywhere else as well, the Church will "come into her own" at last.—America.

THE UNBELIEVER

"John Ayscough" (Monsignor Bickerstaffe-Drew) is the kindest of philosophers, but even he has a rather sharp word to say about the man who poses as an unbeliever. He asserts: "The great majority of those who profess to be unable to believe are taken too seriously. They are encouraged to regard themselves as terrible creatures, gloomy, tragic familiar of Satan, when they are only his Jack-in-the-boxes and tin whistles. Such figures as they are intellectually are best reformed by the laughter their oddity suggests.—Sacred Heart Review.

HEED THE WARNING

"At the beginning of the vacation season the warning is given to Catholics not to go off to some place where there is no resident priest," says the Catholic Columbian. "Abundant rest and recreation can be found in localities where there is opportunity to hear Mass on Sunday and to receive the last Sacraments in case of sudden illness. In serious matters it is criminal to take unnecessary risks."

Sorrow's best antidote is occupation.—Young.

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