

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.
THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

SATAN'S MODERN ACTIVITIES

"At that time: Jesus was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb; and when He had cast out the devil, the dumb spake, and the multitudes were in admiration at it." (Luk. xi, 14.)

Some people are inclined to think that possession by the devil is confined to the times of Christ. History, however, since His time, records thousands of cases where people were under the influence of the wicked spirit, and were freed only through the rite of exorcism as prescribed by the Church. On some occasions a simple exorcism was not sufficient, and it was necessary to add to it much prayer and fasting. But the Church's exorcism invariably produces the results required when to it are added the accessories demanded in certain obstinate cases. A remarkable case, reported at Rome a few years ago, was of a native of Africa, who was a member of the Church. The particulars were given by the bishop who performed the rite of exorcism over him. At first it failed, and he possessed one became more violent than he had been before the rite was carried out. But the bishop added long prayers and fasting and finally, after several applications of the spiritual medicine, the man was freed of the wicked spirit and was totally transformed in his conduct. Similar instances, almost by the score, could be cited, which have undeniable evidence to prove their reality.

Judging from the actions and words of many individuals of the present day, it would seem that Satan has many abiding-places. Not only are some obsessed by him, but many are in his possession. These latter have sold themselves to him and are promoting his cause. It is far easier to excuse the former than the latter; obsession may come, to some extent, from ignorance and weakness; but possession generally comes only through one's own consent. Neither holy water, nor prayers, nor fasting can work a very beneficial influence over him who is in partnership with the evil spirits. The devil does not work in all his subjects, but he needs only to work through some of them. As a message is flashed through space by the power of electricity, so is Satan's message spread throughout the world by the great power for evil of his camp followers.

It may seem useless to say these things to good Catholics, but they are said not because you are in Satan's grasp, but to warn you to stay far away from his haunts. He lives in more places than some people are inclined to imagine, and it is all too easy to the one not strongly guarded to enter his threshold. Some of the young of both sexes have many a time given him a hand, and today he is escorting them through life. They may have almost innocently exposed themselves to his influence, and he, creeping serpent that he is, bit them with his poisonous fang. And how often his bite proves fatal to the spiritual life of an individual! There are serpents crawling the earth, so poisonous that it is seldom a person is known to recover after having been bitten by them. Times without number has the bite of Satan acted similarly against man's spiritual life. And as he creeps and often hides (as does the serpent of the earth) where ordinarily we would not expect to find him, we must be on our guard always and everywhere. If we are strongly fortified by God's grace, his attacks against us, even from ambush, will not prove fatal.

Yet how many open disciples Satan has in this world! He dances in the hovels of his followers, and these hovels are liable to be found anywhere. Solicitors are sent out from them, who are often successful in ensnaring the young and innocent. Under the guise of amusement, the stain of uncleanness is placed upon their souls. How high-sounding the phrases of the language of these disciples of Satan! It sometimes will be art, again it will be modern culture, or social uplift. But when one knows it is all a trap to ensnare, he should realize that some apparently praiseworthy method must be adopted in order to lead him into the precincts of the evil one. There are few who will approach wickedness by the open road that leads thereto; in other words, wickedness, especially in the beginning, is not done for its own sake, but for a pleasure the person imagines it will bring. The evil spirit knows human nature, its ways and by-ways, and he acts according to this knowledge, and not by chance.

Even in many spiritualistic meetings or so-called seances, the devil is the chief actor. Apparent wonders are performed that seem to be to the benefit of some one who is present; but the serpent is creeping behind the facts manifested, ready to coil round the neck of some poor, ignorant, misled humans. He has not ceased since the apostles' times to change himself into an angel of light. Too late have thousands found out this truth, and today are practically wrecked morally and physically.

The Church is the only opponent Satan fears in this world. They who stay within her citadels will be protected against his attacks; but whosoever dares to step out and depend upon himself for safety soon will receive a spiritually mortal

wound. But when one remains behind the battlements of the Church, he must do what she, his guide, commands and suggests. Today parents are too blind to the faults of their children, and too neglectful of the dangers to which they are subjected. They allow them to wander, improperly and insufficiently protected, too far from the walls of safety. We know the times call for some freedom, but they might ask themselves whose influence is most prevalent among the youth of today. It is almost invariably the wicked spirit. License in youth means sin in maturity. The young human being needs cultivation, as do the crops of the field, with this difference, that from the crops the weeds are uprooted or cut and thrown away; from the youth, the spiritual weeds—the wicked spirits—can not be cast aside. So it is necessary that the youth be kept in such soil as does not produce these parasites. This soil is not the street by midnight with reckless companions; it is not the glare of the stage where modesty knows no home; it is not the dance hall where Satan administers a stimulant. Where is it? It is the Church, the home, the Catholic school, legitimate and unquestionable amusement places, companions about whom no question can be raised. God created it nowhere else.

WHERE THE BEST TEA GROWS

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QUESTIONABLE LITERATURE

"Evil unto him who evil thinks," it may be assumed, is the slogan adopted by the gentlemen who have become so deeply attached to the production of novels having to do with sex questions and such matters.

It appears to be rather a difficult matter even for the courts to decide what's what along the line of suggestive literature. Pure-minded, right-thinking people, however, have no trouble in arriving at a decision. Judge Ford of New York found no difficulty in promptly deciding when he found a certain book in the hands of a member of his family. There are many others who arrive at a correct conclusion with equal promptness.

Justice Wagner of the Supreme Court, Special Term, New York, has just given a decision which has a most effective bearing on the case. Thomas Seltzer demurred to an indictment charging him with unlawfully possessing an indecent book on the ground that the facts stated in his indictment did not constitute a crime.

Justice Wagner overruled the demurrer and the defendant was given leave to withdraw the same and plead to the indictment. Section 1141 of the penal Code says that "a person who sells, lends, gives away or shows, or offers to sell, lend, give away or show, or has in his possession with intent to sell, lend or give away . . . any obscene, lascivious, lewd, filthy, indecent or disgusting book, magazine, etc. . . . is guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction shall be sentenced to not less than ten days nor more than one year imprisonment or be fined not less than fifty dollars nor more than one thousand dollars or both fine and imprisonment for each offense."

Commenting upon the case, Justice Wagner says, among other things: "Just as it is of national concern and interest to protect their health, it is equally important to protect our youth against the corruption of their morals so that we may do everything within governmental power to afford them physical, mental and moral verities and not have development arrested in these respects during the formative period. It is a national duty to prevent the moral or physical weakening of the family—The Nursery of Mankind. History warns us that in the wake of a moral deterioration comes physical deterioration and national destruction. Hence our interest in the strict enforcement of all laws to prevent the publication and distribution of corrupt literature. As it is the duty of our law-enforcing branches of government to enforce with vigor these laws, so it is the co-relative function of the courts not to narrow the law's application by accepting tests restrictive of the commonly accepted meaning of words."

The decision is of particular interest to all who believe in clean literature as it is of very special interest to members of the Clean Books League, who have been accused of trying to establish a censorship which would interfere materially with the so-called freedom of the press. Such, however, is very far from the object of the league. No censorship has been contemplated; none has been thought of. What the league desires is enforcement of the present law and the doing away of anything contradictory between federal and State laws. Nothing further than that. Surely no one who believes in law enforce-

ment can object to such a provision.—Catholic Sun.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PEACE MIND

Strife, contention and war, whether they occur in private, social or international life, have their origin in the hearts of men. External circumstances, in the last analysis, are merely the occasions, not the real causes of the numerous quarrels and the ugly squabbles that have rendered this little globe the scene of so much misery. Fuel of itself will not burst into flame; it must be kindled into a blaze by the igniting spark that comes from without. So it is with the conflicting interests of men, which constitute the fuel of the war flame; they will only produce the devastating conflagration of armed contest, when ill-will supplies the fatal spark that sets them off into a raging fire. To think otherwise means to subscribe to the materialistic theory of economic determinism. Human passions are the torches that light the fires of war.

This, in a sense, is a consoling and comforting doctrine; for it shows that wars can be avoided. If it is man that precipitates war, then human effort can also prevent war. The heart of man is a plastic thing. It can be molded and transformed. Man, from a war producing creature, can be converted into a peace preserving being. It all depends on a change of mental attitude; such a thing, though it may be difficult, is not impossible.

The transformation can be brought about by education. Nations can be educated for peace as, in the past, they have been educated for war. They can be taught that it is more advantageous for them to settle their differences by peaceful means than by recourse to arms. The inherent belligerency of human nature, even if it cannot be entirely eradicated, at least may be perceptibly softened so that it constitutes only a remote danger. The work of civilization consists precisely in this gradual transfiguration of native human instincts. If it is possible to train the innate fighting instincts of the animal, it surely ought to be even more feasible to render man more peaceful and tolerant. We must get away from the fatalistic doctrine that war and bloodshed among men are necessary. It is this fatal illusion that has in the past frustrated all serious efforts tending towards the establishment of world peace. The present generation is beginning to repudiate this fallacy and it gives itself with laudable zeal to a world-wide movement for the inauguration of peace among men. In all nations we find disinterested men that bend their best efforts to the development of the peace mind among their compatriots. In due time, these noble endeavors will produce happy results.

No work could be more pleasing to the Prince of Peace. Hence, Catholics will of necessity play a leading part in this glorious movement that wishes to substitute mutual understanding, universal fellowship and helpful co-operation for racial animosity, national selfishness and senseless bloodshed. The Prince of Peace will bless these efforts and bring them to beautiful fruition.—Catholic Standard and Times.

THE SHEPHERDS AND WISE MEN NOW COME TO THE CHURCH

"There is no question," said the late Monsignor Benson, "that, considered in general, two kinds of persons are drawn toward Catholicism and remain faithful to it—the extremely simple and uneducated and the extremely shrewd and thoughtful. By 'uneducated,' I do not necessarily mean 'unlettered,' by 'shrewd,' I do not necessarily mean 'learned'; I mean, rather, the complete religious and philosophical amateur on one side and the highly cultivated on the other."

Now, as we turn to the Gospels, we find at the very outset . . . that it is from these two classes that are drawn the first visitors to the cradle of the Incarnate Word. It is the shepherds of Bethlehem and the Wise Men from the East that kneel there, the simplest and the wisest—the simplest, those who are accustomed to silence and stars and the elementary facts of birth and death . . . the wisest, those who have reached the confines of wisdom as it was then held . . . who were as highly trained and cultivated as the world could train and cultivate them. . . . These two classes, in fact, which, respectively, are not tempted to think that they know anything; and those who, by acquiring of knowledge, have come to know that they do not know anything."

One of these kings is Gilbert Keith Chesterton, the celebrated writer who recently joined the Church, and who knelt at the crib as a Catholic. The "star" of a keen mind started G. K. C. on the road to Christ. His bells were long heard as he journeyed on. He consulted the "Chief Priests" of his own Church of England. They put him in the right path, not, he tells us, by giving him any definite directions, but by their contradictory answers to his questions. He left them, followed the star of his keen mind once more, and when it stopped over where the "Child" was, falling down, he adored.—Southern Cross.

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