

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

REV. F. P. HOCKEY, O.S.B. THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

A TYPE OF OURSELVES

"There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger."

We cannot afford, my dear brethren, to pass by the Gospel reading today. It is a picture, in which we shall find ourselves. Which likeness is ours? That is just the question.

At the entrance of a certain town ten men, who were lepers, lifted up their voices, saying: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."

My dear brethren, repeatedly in the Scripture leprosy is spoken of as the type of sin. So we must not be offended, when we are told that these ten lepers represent ourselves.

But what happened when they were made clean, that so hurt the Sacred Heart of our Lord that He complained? He freely cured them at a word. Yes, God's grace is given freely; the only price is thanks.

Are we clasped by God amongst the nine, or happily, are we pictured by the grateful one?

Let us test ourselves and see. Many pray a good deal, but is not the asking, begging, petitioning out of all proportion to the thanksgiving?

And how often is it the case, that those, who seem to have the least to thank God for, are the most grateful?

And another way we can test our spirit of thankfulness is this: is our gratitude as fervent after confession and absolution, as our anxiety was keen before? There is an old saying, "Eaten bread is soon forgotten."

The practice of being thankful has a good effect on our own heart. Selfishness naturally makes us hard. Gratitude takes us out of self, by referring the good we have received to the kindness of another.

ECONOMIST PRAISES WORK OF THE MONKS

RECOGNIZES THEIR LEADERSHIP AMONG PEOPLES OF PAST AGES

A notable book, recently published "The Foundations of National Prosperity," contains four individual treatises by such authorities on economic questions as Richard T. Ely (University of Wisconsin), Ralph H. Hess, Chas. K. Leith (both of the same university), and Thomas Nixon Carver (of the Harvard University).

In the very last treatise Prof. Carver speaks of the "Conservation of Human Resources," and in this connection he writes as follows, following up the viewpoint of the economist pure and simple:

"Travelers in Southern Europe must have been impressed by the large numbers of priests and their high average ability. Except where this talent is employed in constructive leadership, it is a serious drain upon the human resources of those countries. If it were the stupid and inefficient who were thus withdrawn from productive work the loss would be vastly less. Every one of those countries is suffering from the lack of constructive talent in such fields as scientific agriculture, engineering, and business."

Prof. Carver then continues: "One must not be unmindful, however, of the splendid service performed by the monks of an earlier day in preserving the learning of the ancient world and handing it down to the newer civilization of modern Europe and America. Their part in the civilizing of the rude barbarians of northern Europe entitles them to the respect of all mankind. The laboring monks especially call for our admiration. The clearing of the land, the draining of the swamps, the preservation of the arts of horticulture and agriculture, and the further development of both, was constructive work of the very highest order. Moreover, it was performed at a time when constructive industry was all but submerged by the general brutality and violence which prevailed over the whole of Europe. In those countries where the priests are still doing that kind of work, they deserve the highest commendation. The countries with the largest numbers of such priests are the countries which are advancing most rapidly not only in the arts of civilization, but in wealth and power as well. The way in which they are using their influence to decrease the number of holidays is of the highest utility and must have a profound influence upon the national efficiency. One cannot help being impressed also with the fact that much of the co-operative work among the farmers of Ireland, Belgium, Holland, Denmark and Germany is fostered by the priests in Catholic communities and by the pastors in Protestant communities. The president of the local co-operative society is usually the priest or the pastor."

we have actually been ungrateful. Nine out of ten never thanked the good Saviour for their cure. The only price for fresh blessings is thankfulness and gratitude for past ones. After every blessing "return and give glory to God."

THE METHODISTS SUGGEST GRAPE JUICE

In a recent issue of a widely read Methodist weekly there is an editorial which in courteous language conveys the impression that there is considerable controversy among Catholics as to whether the use of unfermented wine would invalidate the Holy Sacrifice. The controversy, which is taken for granted, is asserted to be unintelligible to the Protestant and to be of no more importance than a discussion as to whether hard or soft water should be used in Baptism. The only reason which the writer of the editorial can find for the insistence by Catholics on the use of fermented wine in the Mass is the Church's dislike for change, its conservative tenacity in holding to tradition, though it may be insignificant, details of ecclesiastical practice, and he gives Catholics the comfort of his assurance that "the establishment of National Prohibition will settle the debate and enable the head of that Church to decide that in the sight of God the unfermented juice of the grape will be just as acceptable as the fermented product."

The thought of a political issue in the United States settling a question of Catholic doctrine is rather amusing, hardly less so than the prospect of the Pope aligning himself with the Methodist in opposition to the century-old teaching of his predecessors. The misapprehension of the Protestants that there is any controversy among Catholics on the subject of the Mass may be dismissed at once, for there is no such controversy. No Catholic holds that the use of grape juice, not the mercantile article, but undoubted, unadulterated and unspiced juice of the grape, would invalidate the Holy Sacrifice, for such a substance is truly called wine because the initial process of fermentation has already taken place in it, even though the complete process has been arrested.

It is not true that the Church would ever declare that such a substance is equally acceptable for the Mass, for the simple reason that it is imperfect wine, not perfect wine, the matter used by Christ when He instituted the Holy Sacrifice and commanded His Apostles and their successors to do what He had done. The insistence of the Church on the use of wine, perfect wine, is not blind adherence to rock bound custom, but exact fulfillment of the Divine mandate.

Nor is the parallel drawn in the editorial between the use of hard and soft water in Baptism and the use of grape juice and wine in the Mass at all to the point. If Christ had commanded the use of hard water in Baptism, the Church would have insisted on it; but the fact is that He issued no such command. All He prescribed was the use of water, without qualification to its exact quality. In the matter of the Mass, on the other hand, He did prescribe the use of wine; and grape juice according to the common acceptance of the term, is not wine. It is true that the Church sometimes permits her priests to use the juice of the grape in which only the initial process of fermentation has taken place; but she restricts its use to certain rare, exceptional and unavoidable circumstances, when the celebration of the Divine Mysteries would otherwise be impossible. Under normal conditions she proscribes its use under pain of grievous sin. Her reason is that she demands a perfect matter for a perfect sacrifice—America.

Recognition of the economic and civilizing achievements of the monks of old is particularly gratifying when coming from such a source. Yet a word of correction, lest a false impression be permitted to spread along with this avowal of merit, will surely be opportune. It must be remembered, that when Prof. Carver speaks of the economic duties of present-day priests and the achievements of those who lived centuries ago, he ignores the fact that these endeavors are not the first and principal duties of the priest. His first and foremost obligation is that of spreading the Kingdom of Christ upon earth. While efforts on the part of the priests directed towards social and economic betterment of the masses are desirable, when circumstances both demand and permit their execution, yet they still remain, and always must remain, works of supererogation. And in the last analysis it will be found, that as a teacher of the Gospel he becomes also a true social leader.

The economic achievements of the monks in ages past are, wholesome as their effect has been, essentially secondary to their initial vocation and pursuits. Their work was a missionary work primarily. Even in their code the "ora" came before the "labora"—prayer and spiritual duties before the manual labors and the teaching of the useful arts of civilization to the heathen. Civilization itself is not a project to their wholesome example of work, but primarily of their teaching of the Faith and the tenets of morality. The result is all the more gratifying because the useful arts were taught the barbarians at the same time at which they received the moral teachings of the monks. But the success is primarily due to the higher influences, and only secondarily to the more material improvement.

Just one word in reference to Prof. Carver's criticism of the number of holidays in some countries. It may be granted that in some instances the number of holidays was so great as to impair the efficiency of the people. Yet it is equally true that the later utilitarian movement seriously over-stepped the bounds of its promoters sought to abolish practically all holidays. Today we note a return, as an evidence of reaction against this movement, to the medieval half-Saturday holiday, and, moreover we have, by and by, instituted no less than seven bank-holidays, besides election days. Furthermore we must not forget that enforced occasional rest is the portion of many workers who are employed in our factories. Hence, a demand for a reduction of holidays in certain other countries should at least be qualified.

In spite of these minor points of disagreement, we must welcome Prof. Carver's frank recognition of the cultural achievements of the monks of the past and many present-day priests. Such an avowal is especially gratifying in view of the many unscrupulous attacks to which the clergy is constantly exposed.—The Guardian.

ONE HUNDRED CHURCHES DESTROYED

The Bishop of Soissons, who is now in Paris, described the havoc wrought in the bishopric of Soissons during the recent offensive of the Germans. He said 100 churches had been destroyed by the Germans and that at least 100 others had been pillaged and partially demolished. The famous cathedral in Soissons suffered severely.

The Bishop added that the Germans knew neither faith nor law; they knew nothing but war and pillage. They were methodically stripping and carrying away everything, he said.

The Bishop also asserted that women, children and old men had been brutally murdered by German aviators, who flew over and with machine guns fired upon long lines of refugees on country roads.—Providence Visitor.

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THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, the translation of her body as well as her soul after death into Heaven, is not an article of Faith. But it evidently has been tacitly believed by Catholics from the beginning of the Church, and at no time in the two thousand years of the Church's history has there seemed a necessity to define it dogmatically.

St. Gregory of Tours, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bernard, St. Peter Damiani, and other theologians, speak of the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin without any reserve or hesitance, as a universally accepted fact.

The earliest writers of the Church, from the first to the fourth century, make no mention of it, which fact may be reasonably accounted for in many ways. In the first place, so near to the event itself, being known as a fact there was no disputing it, and no need of proving it. The evangelists and first Fathers of the Church had to use all their learning and logic to bring mankind to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and to prove of His Messianic mission.

The Church was an acutely suffering, militant body, and had martyrs to chronicle every day and to properly place in the liturgies. Self-evident truths required no conferences to settle them.

That Mary was carried to Heaven body and soul was understood and believed and handed down from father to son without any wonder or question. It was natural and reasonable that the Ark of the Covenant, the womb and the breasts and the arms that bore and nourished as a Son of God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, should not know the foulness of the grave. Numerous bodies of the Saints have been, by God's Providence, preserved through ages intact and fragrant.

It was to be expected that the beautiful body of the Mother of God, the Queen of Saints, should be honored above all created things. And so it was easy and sweet to believe that when the body of Mary was not to be found, a few days after her death, that her divine Son took it to Himself, and reuniting it with her august Soul, crowned it and placed it next Himself in the glory of Heaven.

That God in His wisdom did not see fit to have the translation of His Holy Mother to Heaven witnessed by even His disciples, is no wonder. God's ways are not our ways. His own glorious resurrection, a fact so necessary to the foundation of His Holy Church, had no witnesses but the few blind tools of His enemies. His ignominious Death was a public affair, but His Resurrection was un-witnessed and even His Ascension to Heaven had but a few chosen spectators. Of all the years of His Life at Nazareth with Mary and Joseph there is no authorized, authentic record. He has hidden the events of those beautiful years for the contemplation of the Blessed in Heaven. True, favored souls have time and again in visions been allowed glimpses of that hidden life at Nazareth, and the Church hugs to her bosom these heavenly favors and allows her children to draw consolation and strength from them; but the world is not asked to believe them, and so they remain precious bits of God's generosity to those who love and believe.

There has been no age of the Church in which such glimpses of the Hidden Life of Our Lord with

Mary have not been revealed to some favored soul, but these pictures are precious ornaments, any and every part, of the body of Faith, and the skeptical and the uninquiring may pass them by without incurring the charge of infidelity.

But the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, body and soul, into Heaven shortly after her death, has been a tradition of the Church always, and to doubt or to deny it would incur the blame of heresy.

The Church, while not defining the Assumption as an article of Faith, sanctioned the belief, by instituting the Feast of the Assumption—one of the earliest Feasts of the Mother of God—giving it a vigil and an octave and prescribing for it the prayer of the Introit:

Let us all rejoice in the Lord, celebrating a feast, not in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for whose Assumption the Angels rejoice, and give praise to the Son of God. My heart hath uttered a good word. I speak my words to the Kings.—(Ps. xlv.)

In the old martyrology of the Latin Church the Feast of the Assumption is clearly mentioned. The tradition avers that the Blessed Virgin died under patronage of the Apostles. That on the third day after her death they visited the tomb, but found only her garments and these emitting a sweet odor. They naturally and logically inferred that her body was taken to Heaven. This is the substance of the tradition. There are many details which added to the beauty and poetry of it, but which are not necessary to the reasonable or to the historical evidence of the tradition.

But though the Church has never settled in what manner the Mother of God was translated into the presence and the company of her Divine Son in Heaven the inspired artists of the ages of Faith have been allowed to represent this closing scene of the earthly career of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and under patronage of the Pope, and the full sanction of saints and scholars, have filled the world with representations of the august Mother of God lifted from the tomb and borne aloft by the power of God, through the very clouds which He Himself was pleased to ascend through bodily some eighteen or twenty years before in the sight of Mary and His Apostles and disciples.

Of all the representations of the Mother of God by the early Christian painters none has been more popular or more oft and variously repeated on canvas and stone and shining glass than the exaltation of Mary through space, surrounded by angels, under the title of "The Assumption."

The early Byzantine artists have left to the world numerous pictures of the death and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, all with some, and some with many, of the fanciful accessories found in the oldest legends. Such as the falling to earth of her girdle which the Apostle Thomas receives and is again cured of doubt, as he was after the Lord's Resurrection.

More numerous and more beautiful, and fully expressive of all the feast and the fact imply, are the works of the great masters on this subject. Raphael, Titian, Correggio, Durer, Rubens, Ghirlandajo in fact all the great painters of the renaissance, found in the Assumption an inspiration to some of their very best work.

In all we have the glorified body cleaving the skies surrounded by innumerable angels, and below the empty tomb surrounded by the Apostles. These with their eyes lifted heavenwards as if actually seeing what they believe—the body and soul of their mother and queen carried to glory to reign with her divine Son forever.

But the Church moves with a grave and careful slowness in all matters of Faith. In her bosom she carries the whole deposit of Faith given her by the Son of God, with the authority to "teach all men."

To this deposit of Faith she may add nothing nor subtract. When time and circumstances call for it, she takes from the treasure thus given her a gem and holding it up to the world, explains and defines it and puts it beyond doubt forever.

The Church long ago instituted the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, calling on her children to lift their eyes and hearts and aspirations to Mary in Heaven triumphant through the power of Jesus Christ over sin and death.

But whether in her Assumption we must celebrate the Assumption of her soul into glory and power over all the angels and saints; or the Assumption of her body also with her soul

the Church has not yet said. Finally we may believe both the body and soul of Mary are together in Heaven, and incur no blame. We may believe that the glorious soul of Mary is in Paradise but that her virginal body somewhere awaits the General Resurrection, and incur no anathema.

Circumstances will require the Church some day to declare, aided by the Holy Ghost, which is the truth and all Catholics of the world will accept the Fiat. Hasten the day! for though "blessed are they who have not seen and have believed," the merit of believing, what we do believe, is enhanced when we can say "I believe, because the Holy Catholic Church teaches."—St. Paul Bulletin.

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