

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

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

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SELFISHNESS

"Where are the nine?" (Luke xvii. 17). All prayer is not simply a prayer of petition, of asking, however much we may need mercy and grace and forgiveness. Praise and thanksgiving are due to the almighty and loving God. The angels and blessed in heaven sing without ceasing the glory and praise of God, and their grateful thanks will last throughout eternity. But on earth how different are nine out of every ten of mankind! We are earnest when we want anything; in fear and misery and pain we make our petitions to God repeatedly and earnestly. The favour granted; the fear removed; the pain alleviated; oh, how poor our gratitude! The old saying is true, "Eaten bread is soon forgotten."

We cannot help but think thus with the example of the lepers fresh in our minds today. Anxious, earnest, imploring were those lepers in their misery. The voice of the Saviour filled them with hope, they obeyed; they were cleansed, to their utter joy and amazement; but only one returned, giving thanks to his divine benefactor. Selfish in their prayer, to get rid of their loathsome disease; selfish even when miraculously cured, they went on their way selfishly rejoicing! "Where are the nine?" It is a humiliating avowal to own that we too have been selfish; that we find ourselves amongst the nine. Our conscience can recall anxiety, fear, tears in the past, when we humbly begged of God for forgiveness of some grave sin; in dread of a calamity, or the expectation of death. Yes, and conscience is ashamed to own the brief, half-hearted, or perhaps forgotten gratitude with which we repaid our loving Lord. Selfishness led us to beseech and pray; selfishness led us to forget the grateful thanks that were due.

How, then, can we overcome this love of self, which is the cause of our want of thankfulness? Gratitude is due to God, and He loves us to be grateful. Ingratitude hurt the Sacred Heart of our divine Lord, not now indeed, but in His lifetime. Continually, all through those thirty-three years of His days on earth, our Lord had present in His mind the ingratitude of men, and it grieved Him. He knew all that He would do and suffer for the sinners, and infinite love could do no more—and He knew all the neglect, the forgetfulness, the ingratitude of those whom He had loved so much. We are told that the sufferings of His soul were greater far than the sufferings of His sacred Body in His Passion. The scourging, the crown of thorns, the nails through His hands and feet were less agonizing than the stabs of ingratitude through His tender, loving Heart. The bodily sufferings of the Passion, from His Betrayal to His Death, were over on Good Friday, but in His Heart He had suffered all His life. It was not merely the ingratitude with which He was treated whilst on earth, but all the ingratitude that would be shown Him, the Prisoner of love in the Holy Eucharist. He foreknew how He would be treated, even by those who believe in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar—all their neglect, forgetfulness, disdain to visit Him, to receive Him. They know that Mass and Holy Communion are the supreme acts of love and thanksgiving to Almighty God. Alas! "where are the nine?" Some few are faithful and loving, but where are the nine? By the men, He is often and carelessly forgotten.

What a model of selfishness is our dear Lord! Though He knew all this and suffered it, yet did He give Himself not only to the Cross; but to continue His Redemption, He renews it in each Holy Mass, and dwells continually with us in the tabernacle: "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). If we would only study His selfishness and make the memory of it live within our hearts, it would shame us; it would make us annihilate the self-love within us. Let us, then, learn selfishness from our Lord in the tabernacle. He is there longing for us to visit Him, to pray to Him, to love Him and receive Him. Look back at our own lives. For days, weeks, months perhaps, we have forgotten Him. How cold and distracted we are even in His sacred Presence! During how many a Mass of obligation it has been merely by our bodily presence that we have been before Him, and our hearts far from Him. Selfishness again! Distracted born of worldly desires, of uncharitableness, because self had been slighted or hurt, of memories of self-gratification, of memories of our sinful past perhaps, have occupied our minds. And all the time, He, our Divine Benefactor, whom we were pretending to worship, was waiting for a loving word of thanks.

Our poor thanks—are they worth offering? Are they worthy of His acceptance? Yes, indeed! For His mercy He has made Himself our own thank-offering! Jesus, in the Holy Eucharist, is the thank-offering. At Holy Mass, at Holy Communion, we are united to Him; and our poor thanks are borne up to heaven with His, and accepted before the throne of God.

CATHOLICS OF UKRAINE

E. Christlich in America

Now that Russia, as we knew it, has ceased to be one entity, and is dissolved into extraneous States as well as "Russia Proper," a group of Soviet Republics still holding together, we can at last form some idea of the different elements that once composed the former mighty Empire. It was vaguely known that ethnical incompatibilities and religious sects honeycombed the vast territories of the far; but on one point most travelers were agreed, that outside Polish and other foreign colonies Catholicism was almost extinct in Russia. Since the Revolution this has been amply disproved. Hidden and suppressed people hold up their heads, and here and there Catholics emerge like flowers from the snow. In the most unexpected spots a nucleus is often found on which the in-coming apostles can count for affirmation and extension. All honor to the Poles who, wherever they settled in Russia proper, kept alive the Faith and handed it on. But we would here speak of the Russian Catholics themselves, in their best stronghold, the land of Ukraine which includes the vast stretch formerly known as "South Russia," from the Carpathians to the Caucasus, from the Pripiet River to the Black Sea.

One fraction of this people, 4,000,000 cut off from the national tree, has kept firm till today in allegiance to the See of Peter, faithful to its ancient Rite as to its race. This people of East Galicia, better designated as Western Ukraine, form the natural stepping-stone from East to West. In the words of their pastor, the Metropolitan Mgr. Andrew Szeptycki, to an audience in the Oriental Institute in Rome: "There is every reason for optimism with regard to the reunion of South Russia, the Great Ukraine, to St. Peter's Chair."

The Ukrainians of East Galicia, incorporated as part of Poland in the former Empire of Austria, never ceased to assert their racial individuality, and strong in the support of the Holy See retained their Slav Rite, refused to be classified as Poles, and cherished the links of affinity that bound them to 40,000,000 Ukrainians held by Russia. These were not Catholics it is true, but their Catholic brethren of East Galicia from whom they were severed, knew of the secret inclination of Ukrainians for Rome which the Imperial knot, the prisons of Siberia and countless executions had not obliterated. If the Uniat Church disappeared in Russian Ukraine, it flourished in Austrian Ukraine, that northwest corner of Ukraine territory misnamed "East Galicia." A protest by the East Galician Bishops against molestation of the Uniat Church, for political ends, was recently issued broadcast; but France's protectorship of Poland is stronger than the Allies who are the ostensible rulers of East Galicia pending an arrangement. Religious progress is hampered here as elsewhere by the unsettled conditions of Central Europe. The Greek-Catholic Ukrainians of East Galicia are not for the moment claiming to unite with the vast Ukraine, which after fierce resistance has been compelled to accept the Soviet system, and is therefore, more or less under Bolshevik rule. When the Western Allies had withdrawn their forces, Southern Russia, or Ukraine, still engaged on tremendous conflicts with the Red Army, but had finally to make terms with the victors. She managed, however, to preserve a certain form of autonomy; but revolts are continuous, and the Ukrainian Soviet Republic is a perpetual cause of anxiety to Bolshevik Russia. It is in this region that the outlook for religious reunion is most favorable, largely owing to the Catholic Uniat over the border in East Galicia, who are destined in the minds of their pastors to reclaim the entire Ukrainian population to the discipline of Rome. The ardent apostle, Szeptycki, is of opinion that the great mass of Ukrainians can be converted only on the lines that have been successful with their brethren of East Galicia, which means the maintenance of their ancient, beautiful, Slavonic ritual so readily accorded to them by Rome. Once the "Orthodox" realize that Catholicism is not restricted to a single Rite, that there is no need to limitate the Poles in their celebration of the Holy Mysteries, the chief obstacle to Reunion is removed. Although Russian intellectuals may be drawn by the simplicity and brevity of the Roman Rite, the masses in the depths of Russia who follow with joy and reverence the forms and chants of their ancestors, steeping their souls in the traditions of the first Slav Christians, cannot lightly part with their *Liturgia* (Holy Sacrifice), as they know it. It is now proved that the first Russian Christians received from St. Vladimir the true Faith, afterwards wrested from them by Byzantium. Unwittingly they drifted away; but no doubt their good faith and devotion to the Seven Sacraments have preserved them from formal Heresy. Therefore the Poles, whenever occasion presented itself, gladly extended permission for continuance of the elaborate Russian service, far more lengthy than our High Mass, but never too lengthy for the devout peasants who follow

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every word and every act, responding solemnly in measured chant, to the celebrant and assistants at the altar. The Mass is the great event of their days, and its recent prohibition has led to pitched battles, so that now, in Ukraine at least, the usual Christian observances have been resumed. Many Ukrainians fleeing from the Red troops in the last battles, pliously knelt in the Uniat churches of East Galicia, so similar to their own, and joined their compatriots in the prayer for the Hierarchy, with its Head "the Universal Arch-priest Bishop of Rome," a prayer which is repeated four times aloud during the protracted ceremony of the Mass. Perhaps some echo awakened in their hearts of that very same prayer said long ago throughout the steppes of Ukraine, after the solemn submission of the Ukrainian Bishops to the Holy See. The reconciliation was annulled by Imperialist decree, by massacres and tortures; but its memory survives and the inheritance may blossom afresh.

Without attaching undue importance to the bitter recriminations, going so far as mutual anathemas, between the Muscovite Russian Church and the National Church of the Ukraine, there is no doubt that every effort of the latter to shake itself free tends to closer contact with the Uniat Church of East Galicia. An ecclesiastical congress lately held at Cherson actually debated the advisability of placing the Orthodox Church of Ukraine under the jurisdiction of the Uniat Archbishop of Lemberg, Mgr. Szeptycki. In the present religious chaos of Russia, where Orthodoxy is wounded by the unscrupulous leaders of the new "Living Church," and again of the so-called "Reformed Church," it behooves us Catholics to hasten and offer the only natural solution to a distracted people. Thanks to the initiative of a zealous Benedictine Father from the famous monastery of Einsiedeln in Prague, an organization has been formed, with headquarters in Vienna, for the furtherance of Catholic theological studies among Orthodox Ukrainian refugees. It is proposed to establish a repository of literature in the Ukrainian tongue, and a seminary where Ukrainian students will be trained in the Oriental Rite. The organization, which is headed by the director of the famous monastery of Einsiedeln, and has recently received the approbation of the Holy See, has established branches in different European countries for the purpose of arousing world-wide interest among Catholics for the ultimate reunion of Ukraine. As soon as the necessary funds have been obtained, the seminary will be set up in the immediate vicinity of the famous Uniat Church of St. Barbara in Vienna, where repose the remains of St. Josaphat, martyred 300 years ago in the cause of reunion.

In the district of Kholm, the Uniat Ukrainian Church which was encouraged by Pope Urban VIII. to found a Ukrainian academy, was, after terrible wars, forced by the Poles to abandon the Slavonic Rite and adopt the "Polish" (Latin) Rite. Only one monastery of Basilian Monks was tolerated, and when, a century later, Kholm fell to Russia, the fate of the Uniat Church was still more deplorable. Uniat were forced to apostatize, and after the solemn reception of one group by the Synod and the Tsar, a medal was inscribed: "Forn away by force, reunited by love." Most of the people, however, remained faithful to Rome, and were flogged, sent to Siberia, or cut down by the Cossacks. Catholicism, however, revived throughout Russia when the Imperial Edict of 1905 proclaimed freedom of worship.

This decree was altogether illusory with regard to the Uniat and whatever Latin Catholics may have gained, there was nothing but persecution for "Orthodox apostates." When the Great War broke out the Ukrainians proclaimed more than ever their separate nationality, and their desire for religious independence. Although some ethnographers maintain that the Ukrainians, whatever their aspirations and ambitions, must be considered as Russians; there are many differences between the two peoples. The Ukrainians, Ruthenes, or Little Russians, as they are variously

called, speak an essentially different tongue from that of their Muscovite neighbors. Theirs is the purest Old Slavonic, and they claim also to be of pure Slav origin, unaffected by Greek, Finn, or Tartar. Ukrainians are well built, tall and darker than Russians of the North. They dress in bright colors, are poetical, and of a lively disposition. The brooding sadness of the Northern Russian is alien to their Southern temperament. The Ukrainian cannot live without symbolic religion, and their monks are noted for ascetic lives. With regard to their political tendencies these may be indicated by the fact that in the last elections Moscow returned 1,526 communists and this number went on decreasing and the other towns from Saratov to Tuli till Ukrainian Odessa, there were but 100.

The Ukrainian race counting the Great Ukraine, East Galicia, the Ukrainians of Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and emigrants to the New World numbers fifty-five million.

CATHOLIC WRITERS

The General Intention recommended by His Holiness Pope Pius XI. to the members of the League of the Sacred Heart for the month of August is Catholic Writers. Following so close upon the Holy Father's apt designation of St. Francis de Sales as heavenly patron of Catholic writers this month's intention is in the most appropriate manner His Holiness attaches to the difficult work of instructing others to justice through the instrumentality of the printed word.

The pen, as Cardinal Newman so gracefully expresses it, is the instrument by which "the secrets of the heart are brought to light, pain of soul is relieved, hidden grief is carried off, sympathy conveyed, counsel imparted, and wisdom perpetuated." And writers according to the same eminent authority "are the spokesmen and prophets of the human family." If this is true of writers in general it is true in a special manner of Catholic writers. For Catholic writers, in journals and periodicals, in books and pamphlets, are communicating to the world by means of language the saving truths that the Catholic Church has received from her Divine Founder, and the ripened wisdom which is her inheritance from the ages.

Writing is a difficult art. Even to treat of simple and ordinary things requires patient toil and long study. The wear and tear of mind that comes from long service in writing caused such a master as Newman to utter words of poignant sympathy for those who had to flaunt their intellects daily "before the public in full dress, and that dress ever new and varied, and spun like the silkworm's out of themselves." He was speaking of the popular writers of the day. Catholic writers have even greater difficulties to sustain. They are circumscribed in regard to subjects, they must be ever alert lest error or falsehood creep into their writings, they must avoid technical terms and bring sublime truths to the understanding of the simplest reader, they must clothe ideas in graceful dressing to compete with the ever changing fashions of the literary world, and withal as the Holy Father points out, they must beware of minimizing or distorting truth, while they cultivate the "form and elegance of speech and strive to express thoughts clearly and in ornate language, so that their readers may be interested and enjoy truth the more."

It is the shining virtue of St. Francis de Sales that he could expound Catholic doctrine more satisfactorily and more clearly, and at the same time more patiently and inoffensively than any other Catholic writer. It is said of him that when 60,000 of the people of Chablais were brought back to the Faith by his famous controversial tracts, they did not retain one single unpleasant memory of anything the saint had written.

out dogmatism, some in kindly and sympathetic criticism of morality and life. For all this we may well praise and bless God in heartfelt gratitude, as we beg of Him to increase and prosper the men and women who are engaged in the most laborious of all ministries, that of the written word; to endow them with wisdom, to restrain them from the sharp and arrogant utterance, to adorn them with the nobility of their patron, the Saint who of all excelled in the art of life, and whose pen, like painter's brush or sculptor's chisel in fashioning forms of life, could barb and wing the words that quickened souls to live for higher things."—The Pilot.

HOW HE REASONED

A scholar who had read both sides of the argument between belief and skepticism gave three reasons why he did not become an infidel: "First, I am a man. I am going somewhere. Tonight I am nearer the grave than I was last night. I have read all such (infidel) books can tell me. They shed not one ray of hope or light upon the darkness. They shall not take away the only guide and leave me stone blind. Second, I had a mother. I saw her going down into the dark alley where I am going, and she leaned upon an unseen arm as calmly as a child



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goes to sleep on the breast of its mother. I know that was not a dream. Third, I have three motherless daughters. They have no protector but me. I would rather kill them than leave them in this sinful world if you blot out from it all teachings of the gospel."

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