

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY THE REV. F. P. HICKLEY, O. S. B. SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

A WARNING AND AN ENCOURAGEMENT

"So shall the last be first, and the first last." (Matt. xx, 16) These words of our Blessed Lord seem strange, and ordinary good people hard and almost unjust. To work all day or all life, and after all the last to come to be preferred. But infinite wisdom spoke these words, and infinite mercy meant them for our instruction and warning.

And on two other occasions our Blessed Lord uttered these same words. The preceding chapter of St. Matthew concludes thus: "And many that are first shall be the last" (xix, 30). Our Saviour had just warned His disciples against the dangers of riches, "a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

Let us, then, strive to understand these solemn words of warning. Why were they spoken and repeated? First, to warn good people not to be complacent and self-satisfied; not to relax in their endeavors, striving for heaven. They must not take credit to themselves that they have been, perhaps for years and years, in the service of God. It is God's grace that they have been so. They must not rely on what they have done, but must still press forward and do their utmost.

Now, on the other hand, let us see how our Blessed Lord spoke these words, not as denouncing, but as encouraging. "The last shall be first." He spoke them in defence of those who had been idle because no man had hired them, or had only worked the last hour. He spoke them in commendation of those who were really striving to enter by the narrow gate. They were meant for the poor, the unknown, the sinful, the outcasts, to fill their heart with hope and manly resolution to respond to the call and to their utmost for their Saviour. They were meant for Matthew, the tax-gatherer, who, rising up, left all things, followed Him, and became an apostle, and who wrote these very words of the Gospel with a grateful heart. They were meant for Zachaeus, "the chief of the publicans," but who sought to see Jesus, and as a reward the loving Lord said, "This day is salvation come to this house."

There was another that was the last—yes, beyond the last, an outcast—poor Mary Magdalene! Was she not buoyed up with hope and courage that the last might yet be first? She braved the scorn of the Pharisees; she was permitted to kiss His sacred feet and to hear His divine words of pardon. With Mary, the Immaculate, she was faithful at the Cross of Calvary! And yet another was called at the very last. One short prayer, and he was blessed and promised the entrance to the Kingdom. The last to believe, the first to be rewarded: the good thief beside the dying Saviour.

Thus are we taught, so that there can be no room for doubt or fear, that these words were meant for poor sinners as long as the world shall last. They were meant to lift up their hearts, to encourage them, to strengthen them. God's grace is never wanting. Now is never too late to turn to the good God, who wills not the death of a sinner but that he should be converted and live.

ness, a fall, a ruin. If we are now amongst the first, let us strive to keep with them and not lag behind. And the lesson for the careless, the negligent, the disobedient to God's Church, is this: let them not put off for a day, but turn to God humbly and contritely, resolutely. Though they may be the last, let them set out with hurrying endeavour, and strive to overtake the first. What everlasting joy will be theirs, when they hear the welcome as they enter the Kingdom of God, "the last shall be first."

ECUMENICAL COUNCIL MAY BE SUMMONED

WOULD MEAN AN UNPRECEDENTED ASSEMBLAGE OF BISHOPS IN ROME

The suggestion of Pope Pius XI. in his encyclical outlining the program of his Pontificate that he may call an Ecumenical Council to convene in 1925 has thrilled the Catholic world with interest. "A general meeting of the whole world episcopacy in the center of Catholicism," said the encyclical, "would be most suitable to the coming jubilee year, whence immense advantage might come to the cause of peace after so long and so profound an upheaval. But the re-assembling of the Ecumenical Council at the Vatican would be such a grave event that it is necessary to wait and pray, as did the pious leader of God's elect people, until God gives a clearer sign of His wishes."

Naturally there will be much speculation about the program of the Council even before the definite decision by the Pope to call it has been announced. In the past most great Ecumenical Councils of the Church have been assembled for the consideration of great doctrinal questions. Many of the early Councils of the Church had to do with the political status of the Church and its relation to the State. Later Councils were greatly concerned with the social question of the status of man and the struggle against slavery. With no grave doctrinal question now confronting the Church, it would seem probable that the Council projected for 1925 would give serious attention to the world's peace and are causing so much individual unrest.

By Rev. P. J. Healy (Professor of Church History at Catholic University) During the last thirty or forty years the world has become fairly familiar with "internationalism" in theory and practice. It has been suggested as a substitute and cure for Nationalism and various other ills in the body politic, and has received concrete expression in the form of numerous international organizations, which have held congresses to deal with subjects ranging all the way from sport to science and Socialism. We have had a World Parliament of Religions, an Inter-Parliamentary Union, a World Court of Arbitration, and some acute observers have detected the existence of "the international mind."

These efforts at international action and control have so far failed to achieve what was promised for them that mankind has grown skeptical about internationalism as a theory and an actuality. The need of some method of dealing with the ills of civilization was never more keenly felt, however, than at the present, and the hope of effective action was immediately revived when the announcement came from Rome a few days ago that an Ecumenical Council might be called in the near future. With a thorough understanding of the difficulties that lie in the way of such a consummation, the dispatches from Rome contained the statement that the Holy Father qualified his announcement by saying: "The re-assembling of the Ecumenical Council at the Vatican would be such a grave event, that it is necessary to wait and pray, as did the pious leader of God's elect people, until God gives a clearer sign of His will." The Supreme Pontiff alone can decide when such a sign has been given.

COUNCILS OF CHURCH OLDEST PARLIAMENTS

The General Councils of the Church are the oldest of the parliaments of man. While they are not under any legal compulsion to meet at stated intervals, as are the congresses in our modern democracies, they are nevertheless, great deliberative assemblies, and their proceedings are conducted in a manner best calculated to promote free discussion and to arrive at untrammeled decisions. The procedure which is followed during the sessions of the Councils, is the result of long experience and tradition, and is intended to bring about the rapid and efficient execution of business. Among all the great congresses and assemblies and senates of the world none has ever exhibited the dignity and the solemnity which mark the work of an Ecumenical Council. No other gatherings are ever confronted with issues of such gravity and delicacy; but in spite of the difficulties with which they are confronted, and the myriad influences which are always at work during the progress of a

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Council, these great ecclesiastical assemblies have always accomplished their work with a definiteness and finality that cannot be found elsewhere.

NEED OF PREPARATION

The time between the present and the tentative opening date of the council in 1925 is not too long for the enormous mass of detail that must be attended to before the first sessions can take place. It would be futile and presumptuous to attempt to forecast what subjects will be presented to the Council; but unless unforeseen difficulties arise it is certain that sufficient time will be allowed to carry out the entire programme. Former Councils were sometimes interrupted by war, pestilence or some other great public calamity; some were compelled to adjourn or to change their meeting-place, but the Council ends only when the work for which it has been summoned has been finished.

There are many reasons for thinking that the next Council will be the most imposing and representative of all. Scarcely a year in travel will make it possible for bishops to be present from all parts of the world. Every continent will have its contingent. There will be representatives of the old world and the new. The Council will have more than an international character, it will be Catholic, for Catholic and international are by no means synonymous. The men who will compose it will have influence, not because of the wealth or power of the States from which they come, but because of great navies or armies, but because of their character as divinely appointed shepherds of the flock of Christ. The poorest and humblest missionary bishop will be on a par with the great prelates from the most important sees in Christendom. It will not be a gathering of nations, but of men, and the rejection of the device attempted at Constance in the fifteenth century, of voting by nations, will save the deliberations of the Council from degenerating into the machinations of a few old men, as at Paris.

DIGNITY OF THE COUNCILS

Though widely separated in time, the great Councils of the Church have invariably presented the same character of imposing strength and dignity, and have always exercised a profound influence on the affairs of mankind in general. The first Council, that of Nicaea, was assembled at a time when the Church was binding up its wounds after the persecution of Diocletian. It met in a city of Western Asia Minor now a miserable Turkish village, Is-Nik, with scarcely a thousand inhabitants, which was not far removed from the imperial residence at Nicomedia, and which was easily accessible by land and sea from all parts of the Empire. The Emperor Constantine threw around the gathering all the majesty and dignity which the resources of the Empire made possible. He placed the public posting service at the disposal of the bishops, he attended the Council and addressed it. When the deliberation of the Council had ended and when the heresy of Arius had been condemned, the memory of the Council remained as a great symbol of Christian unity and an evidence of the power and authority of the Church.

All the succeeding Councils have exhibited the same characteristics as that of Nicaea. Whether held in the East or in the West, they have drawn to themselves the attention of rulers and people, and the result of their deliberations has been awaited as a fresh impulse to progress and effort. Some of them, like Constance, were veritable parliaments of nations. Though called to put an end to the Great Western Schism, this Council drew to itself all the statesmen and scholars of Europe. Practically every prince in Christendom was represented there, and the discussions which took place prior to and during the Council, afford, perhaps, the most profound analysis of the problems of political philosophy that any age has produced.

ROUGHNESS OF COUNCIL OF TRENT

Other Councils were brought together in the midst of dangers and alarms. The Popes planned to hold a Council in the sixteenth cen-

tury at the time when Protestantism was menacing the Church from within and Mohammedanism from without, and it was not until after years had elapsed that the Council of Trent could be assembled. It met in the midst of difficulties, its deliberations were frequently interrupted, but it effected its purposes with a thoroughness that made it unnecessary to call another Council for centuries.

When the call for the last Council, that of the Vatican, was issued, it was foreseen that war was imminent but, Pius IX. set principle above expediency, and though war did interrupt the sessions of the Council the work for which it had been principally called was finished before it was adjourned.

Much will be expected from the new Council. That these expectations will be fully realized can be confidently predicted from the history of the Ecumenical Councils, from the conciliar traditions and from the clear vision and the superb courage of the present reigning Pontiff.

CZECH SCHISMATICS RENT ASUNDER

By Dr. Frederic Fauder

Vienna, Dec 18.—The dissolution of the Schismatic Czechoslovakian church is proceeding rapidly, due to developments of the quarrel between the Schismatic "Patriarch," Dr. Farsky, and the Serbian Orthodox Bishop, Dr. Dositej. Details of this dispute were mentioned in previous dispatches.

At the present time the sect is divided into two parties which are fighting each other violently. A new diocesan council has been established at Prague in competition with the council presided over by "Patriarch" Farsky. The new council is fostering the idea of union with the Orthodox Church and is making arrangements for the establishment of religious communities in Prague. It has founded a new publication "Nas Smer," in a recent issue of which Dr. Farsky is denounced as "irreligious and un-Christian" and all relationships with him are declared severed. In addition, the town of Tabor, where the Czechoslovakian sect formerly was in control, has broken away from that Church.

The new Prague diocesan council is planning to hold confidential conferences of all Schismatic priests who are dissatisfied with Dr. Farsky's regime and who look favorably upon the proposition for a union with the Orthodox body. As a result of the constant quarrelling both parties have lost sight of the last traces of the following which they formerly had among certain elements of the population.

FORGE AHEAD

There is bravery in going straight forward, shrinking from no duty, little or great, passing from high to low, from pleasure to pain, and making your principles strong without their becoming formal. Learn to be as an Angel who could descend among the miseries of Bethesda, without losing his heavenly purity or his perfect happiness. Gain healing from troubled waters. Make up your mind to the prospect of sustaining a certain measure of pain and trouble in your passage through life; by the blessing of God this will prepare you for it.—it will make you thoughtful and resigned without interfering with your cheerfulness.—Cardinal Newman.

Mannerism is pardonable, and is sometimes even agreeable, when the manner, though vicious, is natural. Few readers, for example, would be willing to part with the mannerism of Milton or Burke. But a mannerism which does not sit easy on the mannerist, which has been adopted on principle, and which can be sustained only by constant effort, is always offensive.—Macaulay.

See Velvetex Announcement on page 8.

ACIDS IN STOMACH CAUSE INDIGESTION

Create Gas, Sourness and Pain How to Treat

Medical authorities state that nearly nine-tenths of the cases of stomach trouble, indigestion, sourness, burning, gas, bloating, nausea, etc., are due to an excess of hydrochloric acid in the stomach and not as some believe to a lack of digestive juices. The delicate stomach lining is irritated, digestion is delayed and food sours, causing the disagreeable symptoms which every stomach sufferer knows so well.

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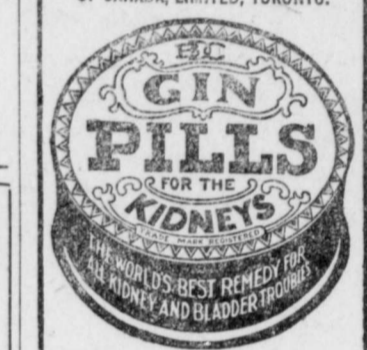
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