

your sincere and respectful acclamations.

I hope and trust, my dear brethren, that of all this there will remain to you something more than a pleasant and passing remembrance: that it will be to you all a lasting and strengthening memory. I asked you before the Council to pray that the Holy Ghost would descend upon us and fill us with His light. I ask you again after the Council to pray that the same Spirit of Sanctification may abide in us all. During these days of work which now are closing we have learned, all together, to love better the Holy Church of God. May we all henceforth by our words, our deeds as well as by the example of our virtues labor to extend more and more its beneficent reign over our country.

SERMON BY THE VERY REV. DR. THOMPSON, PROCURATOR OF THE BISHOP OF ANTIAGONISH, NOVA SCOTIA, IN THE BASILICA OF QUEBEC ON SUNDAY, OCT. 31ST.

"But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that you may declare His virtues, Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." (1, Pet. 2, 9.)

Most Excellent and illustrious Lords.

Dearly beloved brethren, — These words of the apostle have reference not merely to those whom he immediately addressed, but to all the members of the mystic body of Christ, i. e., to all who, having been redeemed by His blood and sanctified by His holy spirit, have been incorporated into and form part and parcel of that divine organism of which He Himself is the head. Their application is irrespective of time or place of any other circumstances or conditions of life, apart from the one essential condition of union with Christ or membership in His holy Church. The message which they convey concerning the priestly dignity and the obligations which it imposes is the common heritage of those among whom the apostle lived and moved, who received it from his own lips, and of those who were to receive it in ages yet to come, of those who dwell in his immediate vicinity and also of those who were to people countries and continents at that time unheard and undreamt of. In these words the blessed Peter sets forth the dignity and excellence of all the children of God's household, who are the partakers in varying degrees of the riches of His grace and the majesty of His prerogatives; riches so inestimable, prerogatives so sublime that our quality and standing as servants of God, excellent as such an attribute must ever be, grows dim before the brighter glory of sonship which He has bestowed upon us through His own Son, Christ our Lord. "Who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ Himself: according to the purpose of His will."

This partaking of the divine nature, by which we become children of God makes us also brethren of Christ and co-heirs with Him, sharing with Him in all that is holy and perfect. It is the pearl without price, the charter and title which assures to us His gifts and graces in this life, and glory in the life to come. In this adoption, St. John sees the culmination of God's charity: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, and we should be called and should be the sons of God."

No part of our fellowship with Christ can be more noble, no feature of our likeness to Him Who has made Himself our brother can be more lovely than the character of his priesthood which He has communicated to us all. For while Christ is beautiful and holy and adorable in all things, He is especially lovable in His capacity of high priest. For it was precisely in His priestly functions that He merited for us the title of "children of God" with all the grace glory, which that title implies: "In Him it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, making peace through the blood of His Cross both as to the things that are on earth and the things that are in heaven." It was through the great sacrifice of his atonement that the shackles of bondage in which the principalities and powers of darkness had held mankind captive, were broken forever. "Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us, and He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross and despoiling the principalities and powers He had exposed them confidently in open show triumphing over them in Himself."

It is the gratitude which responds to unselfish love and unlimited charity which has inspired the apostles and moved the faithful of every age and claim to adore and bless our Lord as the great High Priest and to view Him in that capacity with eyes more tender and loving than in any other. Hence when St. Paul acknowledges His divinity and almighty power, adoring Him as the "brightness of God's glory and the figure of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power" he straightway passes over all his other attributes and prerogatives: He fixes His attention directly upon His priesthood, and shows Him to us as the one who, making purgation of sins sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on High."

The Church of God in this as in all other things pertaining to the word of life has followed in the footsteps of the Apostles. Being filled with the same spirit, guided by His holy light, knowing no other aspirations than those which are prompted by divine love, she has from all the precious truths confided to her keeping selected the doctrine of Christ's eternal sacrifice and priesthood as the special object of her affections entwining about it the garlands gathered and woven by the loving hands of her faithful children of every age and clime. In her liturgy, it holds the central place. Not only in her public services but also in the private doctrines of her children, the idea of Christ's priesthood and sacrifice is ever predominant, so that the whole temple which she has built for her heavenly spouse is filled with the fragrance of flowers that have grown and bloomed on Calvary. In the great hymn of praise

and thanksgiving which is recited daily by her ministers and sung in unison on solemn occasions by the faithful assembled in the churches throughout the world, and in which uniting their voices to those of the heavenly powers, they proclaim the holiness of God and His unbounded majesty, at the very mention of the precious blood which has redeemed the world, the multitudes fall upon their knees to adore. When the faithful, performing that beautiful devotion "The Way of the Cross," bless the name of Christ, they immediately subjoin, "because by thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world." If among all the truths stored up in the treasury of divine revelation, the doctrine of Christ's priesthood is especially cherished, it is not because the rest are forgotten or overlooked or suffer in any way by the special veneration of Christ's eternal priesthood; on the contrary, it is because the holiness of God, His wisdom, His power and all His other attributes and perfections are manifested to us in the sacrifice of Christ, our High Priest, and through Him shine forth with a brightness and glory surpassing all power of expression.

Since all the members of Christ's holy Church partake of His priesthood, it is necessary that we should consider to what extent each one of us is a sharer therein and the duties which that participation imposes upon us. I do not intend to dwell upon the duties of those who have been called to minister at our altars, where "from the rising of the sun even to the going down" the sacrifice of Calvary is perpetuated, where the body and blood of the victim Who died on Calvary for the redemption of the world are presented to his Eternal Father not merely in figure but in very truth and reality. Of the august dignity and exalted duties of those who are associated with him who is a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech, I do not propose to speak at present; but of those who while not priests in the strict sense of ministering at the altar, are nevertheless associated with him in his sacrifice, and share in the glorious office and title of his priesthood, namely, who are a "kingly priesthood" as the apostle assures us.

It seems to me most fitting on this occasion, when the Holy Council which has for some weeks been in session in this venerable metropolis, and which is now about to close; it appears most becoming and opportune to remind you of the great and important part which you also are called upon to fill in building up and strengthening the kingdom of Christ; to remind you that while the task of ruling the Church, of leading the flock of Christ along the path of truth and justice belongs by divine right to the Bishops whom the Holy Ghost has placed to rule the Church of God; while the care of souls and administering of the sacraments is the special work of the clergy who labor with them subject to their direction, nevertheless there is incumbent upon you also the duty, the solemn obligation "to declare His virtues Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." If, as St. Peter tells us, you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, and if he implies that that great and holy dignity has been conferred upon you in order that you may declare the virtues of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, then, assuredly it is your duty to realize that in the work of the priesthood, in declaring the virtues of Christ, you are not permitted to stand idly by, refusing to your spiritual guides and rulers the cooperation and aid that they may need and have a right to expect from you in order that their labors may be efficacious in building up the "spiritual house" acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

In order that we may have a just concept of the part which the laity have to perform as associates with Christ the High Priest, it is well to consider the office of the priesthood and the end or scope thereof. "Every High Priest," says St. Paul, "taken from men is appointed in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins." The office of the priest, then, is to offer up sacrifice. This office was performed by the priests of the old law, who sacrificed to the Lord the victims that were a shadow of the perfect offering which, in the fulness of time, the High Priest Christ presented to His eternal Father. The self same sacrifice Jesus, Who is a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech, continues to renew or perpetrate through the hands of His ordained ministers throughout the world, and who, therefore, are in a most special manner partakers of His priesthood. The faithful everywhere by their presence and by their spiritual union become sharers in the sacrifice and the offering of the same. Hence, the priest at the altar, shortly before he begins the canon of the Mass, turns to the people and says "Brethren, pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the Father Almighty." The union, then, of faith and charity which binds the people of God to Christ and to one another makes them partakers of His divine nature, and in a measure of the dignity and prerogatives which flow from Him as head of the Church. The stronger the faith and the more fervent the charity, the greater will be the extent to which we participate in His holiness, His infinite merit, His dignity, and His prerogatives including His everlasting priesthood.

The scope of the priesthood of Christ is the sanctification and salvation of souls. The primary, the principal and of all things, of course, whether in the natural or supernatural order is the glory of God. But since God is glorified above all in the sanctification of souls, in the building up and perfecting of the spiritual edifice which is the church of Christ, hence we can say without qualification that the scope of Christ's eternal priesthood is the sanctification of souls. It was for this purpose that He assumed human nature and in it perfected the sacrifice acceptable to God. "It behooved Him," says the Apostle, in all things to be made like unto his brethren that he might become a faithful and merciful high priest before God, that he might be a propitiation for the sins of the people. Whosoever, therefore, would enter into the spirit of

Christ's priesthood must keep in view the scope which was ever before the eyes of him "who hath appeared for the destruction of sin by the sacrifice of himself." The destruction of sin, therefore, and the pursuit of holiness must ever be inseparable from the priesthood of Christ; and this battle against sin in the cause of justice and holiness must not be restricted to our own lives alone; our efforts must extend to fields beyond the limits of our own personality, each in his own sphere striving for that which Christ came on earth to attain, and for the attainment of which he has left all the means and aids, not merely necessary but in measure superabundant through the sacrifice of the cross. Hence, when the apostle dignifies the faithful with the title of a kingly priesthood, he immediately adds "a holy nation, that you may declare his virtues." It is the duty then not only of them who stand before the altar to perpetuate the great sacrifice which the High Priest instituted "the day before He suffered" but of all the members of His Holy Church, who by the very fact of that membership partake also of His priesthood to enter, upon the duties which such dignity imposes, to promote holiness in themselves and others. This is the dispensation of God's providence; this is a part of the scheme of His predestination; to this end has Christ redeemed mankind.

Now in order that we may fulfil the glorious mission which Christ has allotted to us, it is essential that we should know the truth, and believing it, propagate it to the utmost of our power. The first requisite, the condition *sine qua non* of your priestly office is to know the truth. As every calling in life demands a knowledge of the things wherewith its followers have to deal, and the duties which it imposes, so also the work of the priesthood demands knowledge, not merely that which comes in the natural order, but that which comes from the source of life and light, the ray pure and serene, guarded against all contamination of human passion and prejudice by the spirit of truth Himself. "I am the way, the Truth, and the Life," says the Lord. We can arrive at everlasting life through Him and by no other way, and this attainment is effected in its fullness and entirety by the truth which He has revealed. Human beings are rational, and will enter deliberately upon no important undertaking or course of action that is not commended by at least the appearance of truth. Action follows perception, and if the mental condition of men be faulty, their mode of action cannot fail to be defective also. Hence, before right conduct can be assured, they must know the truth and embrace it firmly. It is repugnant, not merely to the doctrines of faith, but to the dictates of reason as well, to contend that rectitude of life depends in no wise upon the doctrines which one holds. As well might we contend that a traveller in a strange country can reach his destination without taking the trouble to learn the route which he must select in order to arrive at the point desired. As well might we contend that a captain can bring his ship to the port howsoever ignorant he may be of the laws of navigation or unacquainted with the waters he has to traverse. If knowledge be then required in the natural order, and is greatly to be es-



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teemed not only for its own sake but also for the practical results which follow from its possession, how inestimable must be the knowledge which has God both for its object and its reward. In comparison with this all other knowledge were indeed but foolishness and of no account. "I count all things," says the apostle "to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord." Upon no class of men is the duty of knowing and speaking the truth more incumbent than upon the priests of the Lord. "The lips of the priests shall keep knowledge," says the prophet, "and they shall seek the law at his mouth, because he is the Angel of the Lord of Hosts." If then we would fulfil or as children of God and sharers in the priesthood of His Son, we must know the truth, profess it openly, defend it and propagate it. "There is nothing," says the great Pontiff Leo XIII., "so hurtful to Christian wisdom as that it should not be known since it possesses, when loyally received, inherent power to drive away error." And speaking of the duty which Christians owe to God in the matter of proclaiming the truths of divine faith the same Pontiff adds, "The office of preaching, that is of teaching, lies by divine right in the province of the pastors, namely of the bishops whom the Holy Ghost has placed to rule the Church of God. It belongs above all to the Roman Pontiff, vicar of Jesus Christ established as head of the universal church, the teacher of all that pertains to morals and faith. No one, however, must entertain the notion that private individuals are prevented from taking some active part in their duty of teaching, especially those on whom God has bestowed gifts of mind with the strong wish of rendering themselves useful. These so often as circumstances demand, may take upon themselves not indeed the office of the Pastor, but the task of communicating to others what they themselves have received, becoming as it were living echoes of their masters in the faith." To the same effect the venerable Pontiff quotes the fathers of the Vatican Council. "All faithful Christians, but those chiefly who are in a prominent position, or engaged in teaching we entrust by the compassion of Jesus Christ and by the authority of the same God and Saviour that they bring aid to ward off and eliminate those errors from Holy

Church and contribute to their zealous help in spreading abroad the light of undefiled faith."

The fearful responsibility which rests on all Christians in the matter of spreading the light of the gospel is increased by the fact that its fulfilment may be effected in so many ways and accomplished with so small an outlay of energy on our part that its omission can be scarcely disassociated from gross criminal negligence. There are many ways in which we can contribute to the work of making known to mankind the truth of God. What was difficult to accomplish in former ages has been rendered easy owing to the enormous development in the art of printing, as well as the cheapness and rapidity with which reading matter is now disseminated. The press is a mighty power for good or evil, and the advantage which is being taken of it by the powers of darkness in order to propagate error and iniquity intensifies the obligations of Christians to use the same means in order to establish upon earth the kingdom of God and His justice. Who can estimate the good that has been accomplished in this respect by the Catholic Truth Society, the dissemination of the truths of our holy religion is a work in which all should join. It can be carried on effectively either on a large or on a small scale. It is a work which entails no very great effort on the part of those so engaged. It indeed may be on the account of the comparative ease and facility with which this work can be accomplished that so many Christians seem oblivious of the tremendous results that are its natural fruits. It would be difficult if not impossible to exaggerate the power of the press in our day. Nor is there any probability that its influence will ever grow less; on the contrary it is more likely that as the years roll by they will witness a continual augmentation of what is even today the greatest factor in moulding the thoughts of mankind and the doctrines of the world. If the powers of iniquity were to dominate the press, the ruin of mankind would ensue; and such ruin can be averted only by taking the weapons which iniquity has been so ready to grasp and turn it against the workers of evil. Being assured as we are that the gates of hell shall never prevail against us, and knowing that the grace of God will ever provide the means by which we may more effectively combat the powers of darkness, seeing also that mankind is moved and swayed by current literature to-day as never before, I take it as a corollary that in the immediate future the voice of the Church will choose as its most efficacious channel, the tract, the pamphlet, the newspaper, the magazine, and thus meet her enemies face to face and overcome them. We are indeed but in the threshold of a new era. While the people of God, the Holy nation, the Kingly priesthood have never failed to "declare his virtues," while this injunction of the apostle has at all times appealed to the faithful who, in their spirit of obedience to and compliance with the law of God vary not, nevertheless the ways and means of active co-operation with their pastors are modified by the changing circumstances of their environment. And the pastors fully realize that, at the present day when freedom of thought and speech is carried to such lengths as

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to defy in many instances even the restrictions of common decency it behooves the faithful to use rightly what others abuse and, making use of those means in the cause of God and His justice, to win a victory no less glorious and perhaps more far reaching in its effects than that which their fathers of old won against infidel hordes upon the battlefield.

No army can march to victory without a competent leader, and no leader, however competent can lead his troops to victory unless they be well organized, and carry out diligently the plan of action which the general has drawn up. Hence, the people of God cannot prevail against their enemies unless they labor in unison. For this reason Leo the XIII. points out that isolated action on the part of the faithful cannot be effective in resisting the well organized battalions that are ranged against the Church of Christ. While each one of us

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