

FIVE-MINUTE SERMONS.

First Sunday of Advent.

TAKING ACCOUNT.

"Brethren: Know that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep."—(Eph. xiii. 11.)

There are certain times and seasons in the religious year as well as in the business year that call for special action and attention, and the season of Advent that we enter upon to-day is one of them. Merchants, as you all know, take an account of stock at regular intervals; business concerns of every kind count up their gains and losses at stated times, and bankers and brokers strike their balances.

This special time of accounting is regarded in commercial circles as essential not only to safety but to success. He who is a sorry business man indeed who would let his affairs run on from year to year without an overhauling, and his business credit as well as his business capacity would be rated very low. The truth is, there is no success attainable in any walk of life without the application of this principle. And it must also be applied to the affairs of eternity if we would make a success of the supreme business of life. Now, Lent and Advent are our seasons of religious accounting, and their importance as a help in working out our salvation cannot be questioned. Our Divine Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the Author of our redemption, and the source of all our profits and gain in the concerns of the soul. And so Holy Church, guided by an instinct that is manifestly divine, has set apart the season before His coming and the season before His crucifixion as the special times for us to pause and consider what progress we are making in the way of His salvation.

To-day we are specially prepared for the coming of our Lord. The voice of Advent is the voice of John the Baptist crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths," and the spirit of repentance is the response that is sought for in every Christian soul. We cannot, therefore, be in harmony with this holy season unless, as St. Paul puts it in to-day's epistle, "we cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light," unless "we walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting or drunkenness, not in chambering or impurities, not in envy and contention." It is now the hour for us to arise, make our special accounting, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ by putting off the defilements of sin. If Advent does not mean this much to us it means nothing. We can have no part in its spirit if we continue in a sinful course and refuse to hearken to the inspired voice crying out in the wilderness and demanding repentance.

What meaning can this sacred season have to the besotted drunkard who goes right on in his abominable dissipation? What meaning can it have to the foul creature that goes on wallowing in filth? What meaning can it have to the evil tempered and the evil tongued who, in the clamor of their own passions, fail to hear the voice of conscience? What meaning can it have to any soul in the state of mortal sin that does not immediately resolve on repentance? If the spirit of Advent touches us at all, it should make the vital pause in their career of sin, the lukewarm fervent and the fervent more fervent still.

People are accustomed to flock to the Advent services; they seem to take a special interest in their religion at this season; but where is the fruit? We see a throng around the pulpit, but do we see a throng around the confessional? All real religion in the Catholic Church leads directly to the sacraments, for the sacraments are the divine antidote against sin; religious observances that do not produce this result are of little practical value. Give proof, then, that you really enter into the spirit of Advent not only by going to church, but by going to the sacraments. You know that it is a season consecrated in a particular manner to the service of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and you are in sympathy with it. Put yourself in full harmony with it by a worthy reception of the sacraments. Let the crowds of men whom we see in the church now prove their faith and approach the Holy Table. Let the women show their love for our blessed Lord by drawing nigh to the Divine Banquet. Let every soul seek purification in the Blood of the Lamb, and thus be prepared to offer due homage to the Babe of Bethlehem. What Christmas joy can be ours if our Advent is misspent? "Brethren, know that now is the hour for us to arise from sleep."

TALKS ON RELIGION.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST.—JESUS OUR GUEST.

Our Blessed Lord comes to us in Holy Communion as Our Guest. He says to us as He said to Zachæus, who had climbed the sycamore tree: "Make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house." The crowd murmured, saying: "He has gone to be a Guest with a man who was a sinner." But Zachæus evidently had changed, for Our Lord said to him: "This day is salvation come to this house."

It is a great work, but it ought to be a loving one, to prepare the soul for the Lord. King David said: "The work is great, for a house is prepared, not for man, but for God." When King Solomon undertook the work, he said: "The house which I desire to build is great, for Our God is great above all gods. Who, then, can be able to build Him a worthy house? If heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain Him, who am I that should be able to build Him a house? But to this end only that income may be burnt before Him." (2 Par. ii. 4.) "And the house, before the oracle, was overlaid with most pure gold, and fastened on the plates with nails of gold, and there was nothing in the temple that was not covered with gold." (3 Reg. vi.)

When such declarations are made of the material temple, and that the temple of the old law, what should be the care exercised by Catholics to pre-

pare themselves to be the temple of God, to which the Lord comes in His true and real presence? No wonder that all around the world at the moment of Communion the prayer is said: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof." How careful each should be to have on the "wedding garment" of sanctifying grace. He that is just, let him be justified still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still." (Apoc. xiii. 11.)

We are bound absolutely to be free from mortal sin when we approach to receive Holy Communion. But to be free at all times from venial sin is a virtual impossibility. "The just man falleth seven times." Venial sin is often the result of weakness, of surprise or lack of thought. Our Lord intended the Holy Eucharist should aid such sinful and imperfect persons to heal their infirmities and to help them to the supernatural life. God requires no impossibilities.

"Be ye clean that carry the vessels of the Lord," says the prophet (Is. lxi. 1). Ye must seek to have the most perfect purification of our souls possible for "What fellowship hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." We must aim at purity of conscience and purity of will. We must seek to be men "according to God's own heart." "Peace on earth to men of good will." We must never set up our own wills or inclinations as idols over against the will of God.

Then our affections must be purified. "Where thy treasure is there is thy heart also." (St. Matt. vi. 21). We must wean or lift our affections from things displeasing to God. (St. James iv. 4) says: "Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enmity of God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this, becometh an enemy of God."

When we receive Holy Communion Our Lord seems to say to us, as He said to St. Peter: "If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part in Me." It is His grace alone which can purify our souls and restore to us the garment of baptismal innocence. "If any man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." (St. John xiv. 23).

St. Elizabeth said to the Blessed Virgin at the Visitation: "Whence is it to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (St. Luke i. 43). What, then, should we say when Our Lord comes to visit us in Holy Communion? No matter what we may be in soul or body, in position or wealth, Holy Communion is to each of us a marvelous and undeserved honor. "He that made me, rested in my tabernacle."

We should be generous with Our Lord who is so generous to us. "And Zachæus, standing, said to the Lord: 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wronged any man in anything, I restore him fourfold.'"—Catholic Universe.

THE MODERN ST. PAUL.

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER—FEAST DEC. 3.

St. Francis Xavier, Apostle of the Indies, patron of Australia, was born in the Castle of Xavier, at the foot of the Pyrenees, in Spain, April 7, 1506, and died at Sancian off the Chinese coast, on December 3, 1552.

"In him," says Bunsen, "were renewed all the prodigies worked by the Apostles, endowed as they were with miracles and the gift of tongues. He equalled and even surpassed many of them in the number of conversions he effected, and the distances he traversed, computed at three times the circumference of the globe, baptizing with his own hand more than one million, two hundred thousand pagans, visiting over two hundred kingdoms, overturning innumerable idols, planting churches in every place and even penetrating Japan, where the sound of the Gospel had till then never reached."

Baldens, a Protestant, in his "History of the Indies," writes: "If the religion of Xavier agreed with ours we ought to St. Paul." Hence also Richard Hack layt, a Church of England minister, in his book of "Voyages and Discoveries," calls him "that worthy preacher of the Gospel and that divine teacher of the Indians who, after great labors, after many injuries and infinite crosses, undergone with great patience and joy, died in a cabin on a desert mountain in Sancian, on the confines of China, in the year 1552, destined to all worldly conveniences, but accumulated with all sorts of spiritual blessings."

Even professed enemies of religion paid him reverence after his death, as well as during his life; calling him "the man of prodigies," "the friend of heaven," "the master of nature" and "the God of the world." Some of them undertook long voyages and came to Goa expressly to behold his body exempted from corruption, and which, only excepting motion, had all the appearances of life. There were some among the Gentiles who spoke of raising altars to him, and some Mahomedans did actually dedicate a mosque to him on the western coast of Comorine. The King of Travancore, though a Mahomedan, built a magnificent temple to him, and the infidels had so great a veneration for that place where the Great Father was adored that they durst not spit upon the ground, if they may believe the testimony of those who were natives of the country. In Japan the house wherein he had lodged at Amaguchi was always preserved from ruin amid the disastrous wars that more than once destroyed that town.

Alphonso Leon Barbuto, who had travelled over all the coasts of Africa, avers that in the Kingdom of Sofala, and in the isles about it, the name of Father Francis was in high repute. An Ambassador of the great Mogul, being come to Goa, to desire that some Jesuit Fathers might be sent to explain the mysteries of Christianity to that Emperor, asked permission to see the body of Father Francis, but he durst not approach it till first himself and all his train had taken off their shoes,

after which ceremony, all of them having many times prostrated themselves to the ground, paid their respects to the saint with as much devotion as if they had not been Mahomedans.

The ships which pass in sight of the Sanctian saluted the place of his death with all their cannon. Sometimes they landed on the island only to view the spot of earth where he had been buried and to bear away a turf of that ground. One of the new Indian converts, not content with seeing the place of his death, had also the desire to view that of his nativity. Travelling through a vast extent of land and passing through immense oceans, he arrived at the Castle Xavier. Entering into the chamber where the saint was born, he fell upon his knees and kissed the floor, which he watered with his tears. After this, without further thought or desire of seeing anything else in Europe, he took his way back to the Indies, and counted for mighty treasure a little piece of stone which he had taken from the wall of the chamber.

The crosses which the saint had erected with his own hand on sundry coasts, to be seen from afar by mariners and travellers, were loaded with the vows and gifts which Christians Saracens and idolaters had fastened to them daily in acknowledgment of favors which they had received through his intercession. But that which was daily seen at Goa blotted out the memory of the greatest prodigies, which were erected elsewhere. The body of the saint, perpetually entire, the flesh tender and of a lively color, was a continual miracle. They who beheld the corpse could scarcely believe that the soul was separated from it, and Dias Carvaglio, who had known the saint intimately in life, seeing his body many years after he had been dead, found the features of his face so lively that he could not forbear to cry out, "He is alive!"

The bull of his canonization, bearing date August 6, 1623, is an epitome and a panegyric of the miraculous life of the saint. Since the time that the Holy See has placed the Apostle of the Indies in the number of saints, cities and countries have taken him for their patron and protector, altars have been erected and incessant votive have been made to him, men have visited his tomb with more devotion than ever; and the chamber wherein he was born has been converted into a chapel, to which pilgrims have resorted in great crowds from all quarters of the world.

His charity towards his neighbor has principally appeared in what he did for the conversion of souls. Although his missionary journeys totaled about seventy thousand miles the least of his business in all his travels was to travel. They who knew him best say of him what St. Chrysostom said of the Apostle St. Paul, that "he ran through the world with an incredible swiftness, and as it were, on the wing." Yet not without labor, nor that labor without fruit, but preaching, baptizing, confessing, rooting out idolaters, reforming manners, and throughout establishing Christian piety. Once when his friends entreated him not to expose himself to certain death by a voyage to a distant island, he replied: "Would not traders go thither if gold were to be found there, and can I hesitate when there are souls to be saved?"

The saint's humility was not less remarkable than his zeal and his miracles. While his name was resounding throughout the whole world he despised himself from his own eyes and esteemed himself an unworthy servant, and when congratulated on his success, he replied: "If God works any good through me, it is due to the prayers and merits of my brethren in Europe."

In his voyages at sea he continued earnestly in prayers from midnight to dawn, rising, and that regularly. From thence it came almost to be a proverb among the seamen that nothing was to be feared in the night, because Father Francis watched the vessel, and the tempest durst not trouble them while he held conversation with God. A man of Manapal, at whose house he lodged, and who observed him at divers hours of the night, found him always on his knees before a crucifix, and frequently beheld the chamber enlightened by the rays which darted from his countenance.

He never undertook anything but under the Blessed Virgin's protection, and in all dangers he had recourse to her as his patroness. He commonly wore a chaplet about his neck, to the end that Christians might take delight in saying the beads, and made frequent use of it in the operation of his miracles. In conversation he frequently spoke of the greatness of the Blessed Virgin, and attracted all men to her service. In fine being just upon the point of drawing his last breath, he invoked her name with tender words, and besought her to show herself his mother. His last words were: "In te Domine speravi, non confundere aeternum."

At the time of his death he was forty-six years of age, and had passed ten and a half of them in the Indies. His stature was somewhat above the middle size; his constitution strong; his air had a mixture of pleasingness and majesty; he had a large forehead, and a well proportioned nose; his eyes were blue, but piercing and lively; his hair and beard of a dark chestnut; his continual labors had made him gray before; and in the last years of his life he was grizzled, almost to whiteness.

He was a native of Navarre, and according to the testimony of Cardinal

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Antonio Zapata, who examined his descent from undoubted records, he derived his pedigree from the Kings of Navarre. His father was Don Juan De Jasso, a lord of great merit, and his mother was Mary Azpilcueta Xavier, heiress to two of the most illustrious families in that kingdom. He was one of the first companions of St. Ignatius Loyola. He made his first religious vows at Montmartre, Paris, Aug. 15, 1534; was ordained priest, and solemnly professed in 1537; sailed for the Indies in April, 1531; he entered Japan August 1549; he was beatified by Pope V. in 1554 and canonized by Gregory XV. in 1622.

By an order of John V., King of Portugal, the Archbishop of Goa, attended by the Viceroy, the Marquis of Castel Nerovo, performed a visitation of the relics of the saint, which are preserved at Goa, in the year 1744. At that time, and nearly two hundred years after the saint's death, the body was found with the least bad smell, and seemed on view with a kind of shining brightness, and the face, hands, breast and feet had not suffered the least alteration or symptom of corruption. In the year 1745 the same king obtained a Brief of Benedict XIV., by which St. Francis Xavier is honored with the title of Patron and Protector of all the countries in the East Indies.

THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE LATE CONCEPTION.

By Rev. Thomas I. Gasson, S. J., in December 1890.

It has sometimes been said, by those outside the Church, that the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception formed an addition to the body of doctrines hitherto held. To understand the position of the Church we must bear in mind that, by the definition of an article of faith, we do not mean that new doctrines are invented, that something begins to be true which was not true before, or that Catholic teaching can change. We hold firmly to the doctrine that the entire body of public revealed dogma was closed with the death of the last Apostle. There can be no addition to the deposit of faith as handed down to us by the members of the Apostolic College. But the truths of revelation are not all contained in the original deposit in the same manner; some are expressed therein in specific and unmistakable terms; others only vaguely and, as it were, by way of germ. Consequently, while there can be no objective addition to the dogmas of faith, there can be a development from within inasmuch as that which before was obscure may, under the searching wisdom of the Supreme Pontiff and of the doctors of the Church, become clear, that which was crudely expressed may be accurately and technically defined, that which was but implied in some other truth may be drawn out and explicitly stated. As time goes on, as doubts and difficulties arise, it becomes necessary to determine the boundaries of thought and to adopt those expressions which will prevent all misconception, misrepresentation, or vagueness. For this was the Church instituted to guard and keep the deposit of faith and to explain it to the faithful. Truth changes not; dogmatic facts do not cease to be; what was true when Our Lord preached in the towns and hamlets of the Holy Land is true now and will be true unto the end, but the clearness with which these are perceived will be in proportion to the intensity of the light thrown upon them. The Church only defines doctrine as necessity arises, or as wisdom dictates the advisability of such a course.

Be diligent and accurate in all the affairs of which you have charge; but, if possible, do not let them cause you anxiety and vexation—that is, do not manage them with disquiet, solicitude, and exasperation. Do not worry in attending to them; for worry disturbs the reason, and hinders us from doing well even what does not trouble us. But great affairs do not disturb us so much as a large number of little ones; therefore, manage these also with calmness, and try to attend to them in order, one after another, without perturbation. Thus you will gain great merit by them; for the time that is spent peacefully is doubtless most usefully employed.—St. Francis de Sales.

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