

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

PRACTICAL FAITH NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

By Rev. N. M. RICHMOND

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned." (Mark xvi. 16)

When our Lord had commissioned the apostles to continue the blessed work which He had begun, and as He was about to ascend from the mountain to heaven, He taught in the unmistakable terms of our text the necessity of faith. The text is so clear, direct, and strong that no one can doubt that to believe, in the sense of Christ, means salvation, and not to believe means damnation. Then mankind must choose between faith and heaven, and no faith and hell. We have made our choice, but are we all fully aware of what it is to believe in the sense of Christ? To believe in the sense of Christ means faith, but what does the word faith here mean? Certainly that faith which is the Christ-pronounced passport to heaven means more than that of the same name, which even hardened sinners sometimes boast of having, and which many of those who are now in hell have had. The faith which our Lord requires us to have, and for which He promises salvation, is faith that "worketh unto charity," such as the practical, God-fearing people of every parish have, and the saints have had. "Faith without works is dead." Hence a man can believe all the truths of revelation, as they are transmitted to him by the Scriptures and tradition, and interpreted and guarded by God's unerring Church, and yet be lost. A man's faith will profit him nothing, but, on the contrary, will make his eternal woe the greater, unless he live according to its dictates. Therefore faith in the sense of our Lord, as expressed in our text, means not only that we believe all that the Church teaches, but that we also fulfil our Christian duties.

Since this is so, how can those reasonably claim to be true, practical believers who are remarkably negligent in prayer? The authority on which they believe the articles of faith is not greater than that which pronounces prayer a general remedy against sin, and a general means to obtain God's grace, without which, according to the same divine oracle, we can do nothing for our salvation. Yet day after day, they scruple not to neglect this necessary practical duty of true believers. I am at a loss to know how those can be imbued with the practical faith which alone can merit heaven, who, whilst they claim to believe everything that the Church teaches, hesitate not to enter into forbidden unions contrary to the advice of those who have their spiritual good at heart.

Difficult, too, for me is it to understand how those can believe in the sense of our Lord, who enter upon a new state of life without first having sought the favor and assistance of heaven by the proper use of the means pointed out by their faith, or how others can feel satisfied that their faith is all that it ought to be, who freely dispense themselves from fast and abstinence with little or no reason, or absent themselves from Mass on days of obligation, or remain a whole year from the sacraments, notwithstanding their frequent and grievous lapses into sin. Surely no one will argue that the person has the integrity of faith which our Lord demands for salvation, who remains away from the Sacraments year after year, but to keep up appearances, attends to other minor duties, and is strong in protests that his faith is without a flaw, or the person who goes so far for appearance sake as to abuse the Sacraments by receiving them sacrilegiously, and then returns to continue in the immediate occasion of sin, or, at least, to expose himself from time to time, as before, to the occasion without any necessity. Does not God's word in the Scriptures tell us "to fly from sin as from the face of a serpent?" Are we not forewarned by our blessed Lord that "he who loves the danger shall perish in it?" And who can point at it as a hyperbole when I say that the number of souls that have been murdered by the occasions of sin is even greater than the number of bodies that have been killed by plagues, wars, and famines? Certainly those who thus live would not like to hear suddenly taken into eternity in such a state, anxious with such unpractical faith. Amusing it would be, were it not for the terrible consequences, to hear drunkards proclaim the integrity of their faith whilst they squander in dissipation and brutal—nay, worse than brutal—indulgence the earnings, the means they owe to their families. The Holy Ghost compares them to senseless beasts: "They are compared to senseless beasts, and become like to them." We never look for faith—saving faith—in human, or senseless beasts. Neither do we expect to find in parents who never instruct their children, and are quite indifferent about sending them where they will be instructed, who have little or no Christian concern for them, and never correct them for their souls' sake, whose prayer for their well-being is always wanting, and whose conduct for them is a continual source of scandal, that sterling, practical faith which our Lord demands of us. Alas! how many there are, therefore, who falsely imagine that they are believers, but in the sense of our divine Lord are so far from it as to be in a constant state of damnation because of their lack of practical faith. These few thoughts

should serve to make us enter into an examination of our lives to see if we are of their number. The man of practical faith will undoubtedly, as our Lord tells us in the text, be saved, but the man whose faith is not practical, no matter how sound or correct, or universal it may be in theory, will no more enter the portals of heaven than the man who is totally devoid of faith. The true member of the Church is such not only in theory but also in practice, and for him heaven is a certainty. No such person can be found in hell, for no child of the Church in the full sense of the term is lost. Hence the words of our Lord, "He that believeth," that is, so as to prove his faith by his truly Christian conduct, "and is baptized shall be saved." Those, then, that are lost, who in life bore the name of members of the Church, are lost because in the full sense of the term they were not members of the Church, they were not in the full sense Catholics.

TEMPERANCE

THE WAR, PRISONS AND DRINK

A leading article in the Tablet, London, (March 18) notes certain signs that, says the writer, herald the coming of happier times. Jails "those blots on the English landscape" are becoming less necessary, prison buildings are being torn down, or devoted to better uses:

This year a score of jails are to be closed, wholly or in part. Eleven are to be shut up entirely, and five others will soon share the same happy fate. In four other cases a wing will be closed. In such ancient and historic towns as Warwick, Chelmsford, Hereford, Stafford, St. Albans, and Devizes there is now no jail, and for the best of reasons. And the interesting thing to note is that the war has accelerated a change which has long been in progress. Between the years 1904-5 and 1913-14, the total convictions had fallen from 568,000 to 478,000, the population to 369,000,000, the first effects of the war began to be felt, came a further immense drop to 281,000 in 1915.

The Prison Commissioners attribute the decrease in crime to three reasons—the absence of so many men from the country, the new facilities of making an honest living, and the new restrictions on the drink traffic. The drink bill for the year, however, shows that while the consumption of spirits went up by 3,326,000 gallons, "Altogether, during a year of war and economy, the nation drank away £181,959,000," says the Tablet writer. "Of that sum, £78,000,000 went to the Exchequer in the form of taxation."

The London Times points out that while less beer has been drunk, the consumption of spirits has increased, and that the use of cocoa has grown largely. The expenditure for cocoa rose from 60,000,000 sterling in 1913 to more than 100,000,000 in 1915. Cocoa is a foreign product, which makes the increase in its use at the present time not altogether satisfactory.

The writer in the Tablet, remarking that cocoa has a food value, and can not be accused of a tendency to fill jails and lunatic asylums, notes the effects of alcohol, including the enormous economic waste involved in its production:

The Board of Agriculture estimates the land under barley, intended for brewing and distillation, at 871,000 acres. Those acres might have been used to grow bread for the people, and so released shipping for urgent needs. In the same way, 600,000 people are now engaged in the production and distribution of strong drink, who would otherwise be available for some form of war service.

Mr. Lloyd George recently voiced a sentiment favouring prohibition, when he said that "there was no doubt at all that the diminution of facilities had resulted in the diminution of drinking."

But the restrictions do not seem to restrict in the most effective directions. More whiskey is being drunk now than before the war: "Our difficulties have been largely with whiskey," said Mr. George. "Beer is kept under much better control. It is a big, bulky, lumbering thing; you can not carry a gallon of beer about in your pockets. But you can carry the equivalent of that in your pocket." He expressed his regret that the House of Commons had not risen to its opportunity to deal with the whiskey problem in the only effective way.

GENERAL INTENTION FOR JUNE

RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XV.

GREATER DEVOTION TO THE HOLY EUCHARIST

The Holy Father is asking his children to go in ever-increasing numbers to the altar-rail, in order that they may find strength for their own souls in the Bread of Life and may influence their neighbors by the example of their piety and fervor. He would have Catholics throughout the world feel that, while they should not neglect their own spiritual welfare, they have, as citizens of the Kingdom of God on earth, an obligation of edification and zeal to fulfil towards the rest of mankind. In other words, we Catholics who possess the entire truth as a precious heirloom and who appreciate the treasure we possess, have a duty to perform in regard to those millions who are Catholics only in name, as well as to those other millions who, through no fault of theirs, live outside the pale of the Church. One of our noblest duties is to inspire them by the eloquence of our example with a love and reverence for the august Sacrament of the Altar, the holiest of our mysteries, the sun around which the other Christian mysteries revolve.

Other Pontiffs before Benedict XV. have, at various times, sent similar messages to the Catholic world. They taught that the Holy Eucharist is a bond of union among the children of the Church and that our attitude towards this Sacrament is the test of our faith and the measure of our hope of salvation. A great truth this is, one liable to be forgotten in the strenuous years when there is so much to draw men's minds and hearts away from the only things that matter. And yet it was the Holy Eucharist that vivified the souls of Catholics in all ages; it was this precious Manna that gave them the graces needed in their various states of life; it bound members of the Church together in a compact body and made them conscious of their strength; it filled them with zeal not merely for their own salvation but for the salvation of the world.

Christ established His Church, He promulgated His laws, He instituted the sacraments of those laws and provided for those who would keep on interpreting them till the end of time; but the link which was to bind all who were subject to His laws was the Holy Eucharist. All who partook of this Food were to be looked on as members of His flock united in the bonds of faith and love; all who did not communicate with Him in His Body and Blood were to be considered as outside His visible Fold.

It was the Holy Eucharist that brought the Apostles and our Lord together in the Cenacle. It was the Holy Eucharist that fortified the millions of martyrs and virgins in the early persecutions, and gave them strength to withstand the fury and the tortures of the Roman tyrants. "In presence of the scourge, the rack and the fire," wrote the late Bialostocki, "the Christian instinct magnified the Holy Eucharist. To the bishops and saints of the first three centuries the Eucharist was the pledge of that strength of God by which alone the martyrs could hope to triumph. The little flock that met together under the shadow of bloody proscription, partook with eager spirit and humble heart of that holy Food which had gloriously risen from the dead. The haloed Bread was carried from the altar to the home and reserved and partaken of with loving reverence by faithful hearts prepared for death. To the father and mother of the Christian family and to their household it was the sign of fellowship with the scattered Church whose holy rites were forbidden. It was carried to the confessor in prison, by stealth and in peril; it was the secret of the eye of the martyr when he faced the tribunal and the torture, the Bread of Life strengthened them in the hour of trial. Even when a servant of God had lapsed and betrayed his Master, the Blessed Sacrament was not denied on the sinner's repentance; there was no long penance or probation, but the sacred Gift was given without hesitation in the presence of a danger which threatened every moment, and which the Eucharist alone, as the Church was persuaded, could enable flesh and blood to meet. It was through the same Christian instinct, strengthened by the traditions of those years of conflict and peril, that the faithful from the earliest times have looked to the Blessed Sacrament to secure them at the hour of death; for death, whether it comes in the tortures of persecution or in the suffering sent by God, in the trouble of temptation or in the peace of Christ, is always an hour of danger and of anxiety. Thus as the Church emerged from persecution, and great Christian communities formed themselves in the cities and towns of the civilized world, the Blessed Eucharist took its place as the Sacrament of unity and strength, the sign and mark of a Christian, the pledge of a death in God's holy fear."

When missionary effort had succeeded in bringing nations into the Fold it was the Holy Eucharist that fed the souls of millions of neophytes, who, strengthened by this Food, started out in earnest on their

journey to eternity. In their enthusiasm they raised cathedrals, churches, chapels, oratories, for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice, temples which should be fitting resting places for the King of kings, hidden under the sacramental veil; but in the mind of the King Himself, the most fitting temple in which He could rest, and in which He preferred to rest, were the hearts of men. This is why the reception of Holy Communion has always and everywhere been urged in the Catholic world. Since the Council of Trent two other movements have been assuming wider proportions year after year, namely, the visiting of the Blessed Sacrament where it is reserved, and the solemn exposition of It in the presence of adoring thousands; but the most efficacious movement of devotion to the august Sacrament is its reception under the form of Holy Communion.

In the past century and a half the devotion to the Sacred Heart has helped greatly to spread devotion to the Holy Eucharist, by bringing out in strong relief, and in ways easily understood by the faithful, the boundless love of our Lord for His children. But devotion to the Sacred Heart had first to fight and conquer the Jansenistic heresy, a heresy which instilled into human hearts a sort of excessive fear and a sense of unworthiness which held souls back, as if God were a tyrant and not a God of love. The task of undermining this insidious error was not an easy one. Even pious Catholics were prone to take scandal from the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and the discipline of the Church; but they were at last made to understand that the reception of the Eucharist was not precisely a reward for virtue acquired but rather a means of acquiring virtue, and that those who partake of the Body of the Lord in a state of sanctifying grace and with the actual devotion of a conscious good intention, could not possibly be irreverent to the great Sacrament of God's love. Devotion to the Sacred Heart succeeded in banishing all the scruples and prejudices which were the legacy left by Jansenism; it turned reverential fear into enthusiastic filial love. Millions of pious Catholics were consoled to learn that the Saviour seizes the occasion and the opportunity which Holy Communion gives for augmenting the spiritual life of their souls and for drawing them near to Himself.

The memorable decree of Pius X. marked the beginning of a new epoch in the spiritual life of the Church, and the trend is now in the right direction. Frequent, even daily, Communion is becoming the characteristic note of the age in which we live, and we may look forward to a generation of Catholics who will be far more thorough than we ourselves or our predecessors have been. The great majority of those frequent and daily communicants will keep free from mortal sin, they will be more zealous for their spiritual advancement, more assiduous in daily prayer, more generous in self-sacrifice; they will be braver, simpler, less ready to compromise with the world, the flesh and the devil than we are now. They will be readier to put religion before everything else, they will stand up for their faith, and teach their children to be proud of being Catholics. Greater personal piety within the Fold, greater zeal for the conversion and spiritual welfare of those outside of it will be the result of frequent and daily Communion. What more may we reasonably ask of Catholics?

And yet one should not be too enthusiastic; a long road has to be gone over and many obstacles must be overcome before that happy millennium is reached. While there is much in the Catholic world to edify and console us there is also much to rouse and to grieve. We are faced by too many spineless Catholics who need something to rouse their dormant faith. We have the spectacle of multitudes who, while they profess allegiance to the Church, find it hard to transmute their allegiance into deeds when the time comes for action. They are the people who would willingly accompany our Lord to Cana and Thabor, but who would take every precaution to avoid Calvary or the Desert. Men of this stamp, victims of human respect, are ever ready to apologize for being Catholics; they are worldlings who are willing to surrender their arms in the presence of the first scoffer just as Peter did at the sneer of the servant. And yet we know from the Gospel that one look of the Saviour brought the cowardly Apostle back to a sense of his duty. A passing glance of the Lord made him see in a twinkling how low he had sunk, but at the same time it gave him the strength to rise from the slough into which his weakness had carried him.

What the Lord did for Peter He is willing to do again for us. He is no longer visible to us as He was to Peter, but He is still with us invisible under the sacramental veil. The Presence which will strengthen us, as it did Peter, is His Holy Eucharist. He instituted it so that He might be able to stay with us, to unite Himself to us, to direct our faltering footsteps, to help us rise after our falls, and then supply us with the graces needed to keep us from falling again.

These few remarks will help to explain why the Church and her Pontiffs are urging us to more frequent Communion. If we have any zeal for our own souls or for the souls of others, we will take to heart the messages sent us by our Holy Father this month and form the resolution to go to Communion as often as we can, if not daily at least more fre-

quently than has been our custom heretofore. It would be superfluous to ask all devoted clients of the Sacred Heart to take up a holy practice which is already theirs; rather let them use their influence on others, so that these too may profit by the infinite graces which will come to them in Holy Communion.

E. J. DEVINE, S. J.

COULD TEAR THE TARTAN

THE SPELL OF THE GAELIC ON A HIGHLANDER IN THE TRENCHES

I met two Scots soldiers on the Boulevard, writes the Paris correspondent of the Paris Herald, and it being within the permitted hours I was able to invite them to a cafe. One of them was a regular character, a Stirling man, and he was full of years of life in the trenches. The one which struck me most was this, which I shall tell after his fashion, making discreet emanations at points of vocabulary where the sub-editor would interpose if I didn't. "It was up there near Loos, an' we were doon in a French village for our three days' rest. I was wi' two ither o' our chaps, one a Border man, an' the ither Peter Frazer, a regular Hiellander, who always speaks Gaelic when he gets a bit excited. "We were just gettin' near the cafe when a French priest stopped up, an' began jabberin' away as fast as he could. I thoct he was speakin' French, an' was just going to tell him we couldn't work the parley-voe, when I got a sight o' Peter Frazer's face. "He was star' at the priest as if he saw a ghost, an' his face was workin' so that I wasn't sure if he was goin' to kick or kiss him.

THE VEINACULAR "An' then he began. An' there could not possibly be irreverent to the great Sacrament of God's love. Devotion to the Sacred Heart succeeded in banishing all the scruples and prejudices which were the legacy left by Jansenism; it turned reverential fear into enthusiastic filial love. Millions of pious Catholics were consoled to learn that the Saviour seizes the occasion and the opportunity which Holy Communion gives for augmenting the spiritual life of their souls and for drawing them near to Himself.

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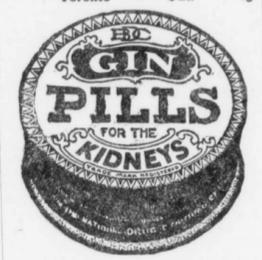
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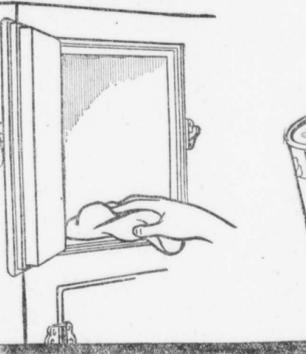
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Advertisement for LUX soap, featuring the text 'To add to the life and beauty of woollens, flannels, laces and all kinds of sensitive fabrics—use LUX' and an illustration of a woman washing clothes.

Advertisement for Gin Pills, featuring the text 'Gin Pills FOR THE KIDNEYS' and an illustration of a person sitting at a table.

Advertisement for 'A Book About Money' by Standard Reliance Mortgage Corporation, featuring the text 'How to get it. How to hold on to it, and how to make it work for you, will be sent free to everyone who writes for a copy and mentions this paper.'

Advertisement for 'Do Not Risk Your Favorite Linens in the Laundry, Mrs. Canada!' by E. B. Eddy Company, featuring the text 'Have the work done at home under your personal supervision with An Eddy Indurated Washboard'.

Advertisement for 'HYLO SILO' featuring the text 'Sweet Fresh Ensilage down to the last forkful' and an illustration of a silo.