

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

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

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

CHRISTMAS

"There was no room for them in the inn." (Luke II, 7.)

There is a word ever dear to our hearts, but dearer at this Christmas season than at any other time. Our hearts agree with the old saying: "There is no place like home." Home! what a charm, a fascination clings to that word. It does not matter whether it is a mansion or a cottage, so that it is our home. Childhood's affection nestles round our home, and it is the pride and comfort of venerable old age. And Christmas is the time of all others when our memory and thoughts gather round our home. We all go home in spirit or in glad reality at Christmas. And amidst all our pleasures and comforts we have a thought—a loving thought for those who are far away, whether distance or death separate us. We remember them all at Christmas. We miss their voices and their tender glances; we notice a vacant chair or a little token of the past. For chance on coming to the Christmas Mass we may cast a wistful glance at the churchyard, where in their little home some dear one is at rest.

Just as it was nineteen hundred years ago, there will be gatherings of friends and happy hours spent in our homes this Christmas-time. Yes, it was a busy and a festive time at Bethlehem, the little city of David, so many centuries ago. All the friends and kinsfolk of the place were gathered together for the taking of the census. By order of the Roman Emperor the people had to be counted, each in his native place, the old home of the family. So that all the people, rich and poor, had come from all parts, far and near, each to be enrolled in his own city. Each house was full and the inn crowded with these family gatherings.

But there were two poor travelers—oh, you know them well—who had journeyed in the winter-time all the way from Nazareth. And they had no home. No welcome was waiting for them. Doors were pitilessly closed against them as they humbly sought a shelter. And the gospel says: "There was no room for them in the inn." When the bleak night came on, Mary and Joseph sought refuge in a cave, which was used as a stable. There our Lord was born. "And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." (Luke II, 7.) The very One Who provided all those homes for others had no home Himself. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John I, 11.)

As of old, so now, Christ Jesus our Lord is seeking a home. How many at this holy Christmas-time, taken up with the comforts and pleasures of the season, with their house full of friends will treat Him like the Bethlehemites of old! How many will fail to recognize the wanderers, and, closing the door against them, will soon forget the cold and cheerless night without! There are those standing without, who indeed deserve a home. Joseph and Mary would bring Jesus to us, if we would but let them. Oh, the bitter irony of this festive time! Why is it a festive time? Because of the birth of Christ. His blessed name and the name of holy Mary united—Christmas—is on every tongue. The world resounds with Christmas greetings, but to so many, so very many, there is not a thought of remembrance of Him.

So much for the world at large, but not, please God, as regards ourselves. Yet even amongst Catholics there are men who forget Christ at Christmas-time. We must redouble the fervor of our piety to make up for those who forget Him. Who is it that their hearts keep standing without, and refuse to bid Him enter, and give Him welcome? Is it a beggar? Yes, a beggar indeed! "He came into the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not!" Everything we have belongs to Him. He gave it to us all. Where would be our home, if He had not given us our health and our livelihood, our happiness, our children, our very existence? And now He will not force us, but asks us, begs of us to give Him a home. And He that seeks a home is no stranger, but a kinsman and a brother. He made us His brethren. For the Son of God became man, that we poor men should become the sons of God. He came "to be in all things like His brethren" (Heb. II, 17.)

He deserves a welcome; and we can give Him one. He seeks a home, and we have one to offer Him—our heart. Do not let this holy time pass by without bidding Him enter and make it all His own. His coming was all for us. He came to stone for us; to give to our poor lives and daily actions an eternal reward. He came as an infant to force us to love Him; to make it easy for us to remember Him; to take away all fear, and to give us full confidence in His devoted love for us. Our hearts are unworthy of Him, but if they are all for Him, He will gladly make His home there. And Mary and Joseph will teach us how to serve Him and be faithful. Our hearts, for a little while now, to be His home, where

His love will reign supreme; and then, so soon, our home will be with Him in the Kingdom of His glory.

THE GREAT CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

By Rev. Peter Guilday, D. D.

Alone of all the festivals in the Christian calendar, to be called "Merry," the feast of the Nativity of Our Lord stands like an open portal at the end of one year and at the beginning of another, through which we pass leaving behind us all our cares and sorrows to become again the little children Christ loved so tenderly. There have been across the waters of our soul tides of worry and of trial, of temptations and of sins, of joy and of successes, that have ebbed and flowed like the current of a stream. At no other season of the year is there such genuine surcease for the soul. Easter we call "Happy," but it comes so quickly after the tragedy of Good Friday that there is not the same unfeigned joy in its celebration. It is significant that in the early Church the "Gloria in Excelsis" was sung only on Christmas Day, as if the jubilant note of joy and the heartfelt outburst of "Glory to God in the Highest" could only be sung on the anniversary of the day the angels sang it to a world that was weary waiting for its Redeemer.

In its own mysterious way, Christmas makes children of us all. On that morning, as the Master looks out from the little Bethlehem of the Altar, He sees kneeling in adoration before Him not the old and the middle-aged, not the youths and maidens, who are standing on the brink of a swifter river of life, but a host of children, who love as children, who worship as children, who look up into the Divine Infant's eyes with the unquestioning faith of children.

TURNING POINT OF YEAR

The celebration of Christmas as a cardinal point, on which the ecclesiastical year turns, stretches back like a silver river to the days of the Apostles. Certainly, Mary and Joseph kept the birthdays of our Lord just as our own parents kept our anniversaries in our childhood. There is extant a letter from St. Clement, the third Pope in the great dynasty of Roman Pontiffs, commanding that the Nativity of Our Lord be observed in the Church on November 25, each year. From that time down to the later Middle Ages, the celebration of the feast grew, until finally the Christmas tide extended from December 24 down to January 6, or twelfth night. These twelve days, bringing the old year and the new, were essentially a time of merriment and laughter, for in the houses of kings and nobles, in the monasteries and convents, and in private families, the youngest child ruled as king, abbot, superior, and parent. It is in these far off medieval days that nearly all the Christmas customs we have today take their origin.

The giving of presents on Christmas morning in memory of the Three Wise Men from the East; the returning home of sons and daughters to the family hearth, there to become little children again around their parents; the charity that ruled as Lady Charity reigned in the heart of Francis of Assisi; the special care of the poor in memory of Our Lord's poverty in the manger; the sight of old Father Christmas with his venerable brow and snowy beard winding all hearts like flax around the Infant Messiah; the hanging of the mistletoe branches with their mystic leaves and berries; the Yule log carried in from the forest to the old fireplace; the revellers with their cheery laughter and lilting songs; the Christmas carols with their childlike simplicity; and the Christmas tree with its green boughs and spangles and stars—all these and many more of our Christmas traditions are traceable all the way back to the dim and misty past, when the spirit of the angels' song, the Christmas hymn of glory to God and peace to men, and to make it resound from one end of our beloved land to the other, for this is the month and this the happy morn.

ITS INFLUENCE ON LIVES

In this respect the feast of Christmas is unique. Of all the days made sacred by the Church, Christmas exercises a wider and a more penetrating influence in our lives. The whole atmosphere about us is changed. In our houses, our offices and workshops, in our schools and churches, the sublime and mysterious power of Bethlehem penetrates everywhere. None can escape it; none wishes to escape it. No other hymn in our liturgy grips the heart like the "Adeste Fideles." No other day is sanctified with Mass at midnight, when the stillness that lingers beneath the stars, the words, which link earth with Heaven and man's soul with God, are whispered, and Bethlehem with Mary and Joseph, the shepherd's and the angels, is renewed as truly and as really as on the first Christmas morn.

IN A CHASTENED WORLD

The world is chastened today by the struggle which but yesterday had fastened itself upon the men and women of all climes. We are beginning, faintly, it is sure, to rouse our affrighted hearts and to welcome the Christmas bells that call us to the House of God, where we shall hear again the sublimest message of Christianity—peace on earth to men of good will. Like circles that widen round and full

upon a clear and blue lake, the spirit of peace, of salvation from the misery of the past few years, of release from the sordid influences which brought such evils upon us, is spreading its welcome and its special message of hope to us of this latter day and hour. Striving for mastery in our souls is this spirit of hope, and we who are Christ's as Christ is God's to use St. Paul's striking expression, have it as our duty especially at this time when the hearts of men and women are under the spell of the Christmas tide, to spread the balm of hope all about us. Our supreme happiness during these sacred days is to renew the confidence in God in men's souls, to banish misgivings in God's all-pervading providence, to instill feelings of delight in hearts that are broken and sorrowed during this advent of the Redeemer's coming. We, who have the faith, can not be lacking in hope, as we should not be wanting in charity; and all three are the fruits of peace and understanding.

RISING ON WINGS OF HOPE

The spirit of Christmas teaches us that other ages and other peoples have seen the same doubts and misgivings and have experienced the same reluctance many of us today may feel against allowing our hearts to sing out like carefree children during these merry days of the Christmas tide, and that they surmounted their doubts on the wings of hope. One of the old English Christmas carols tells us:

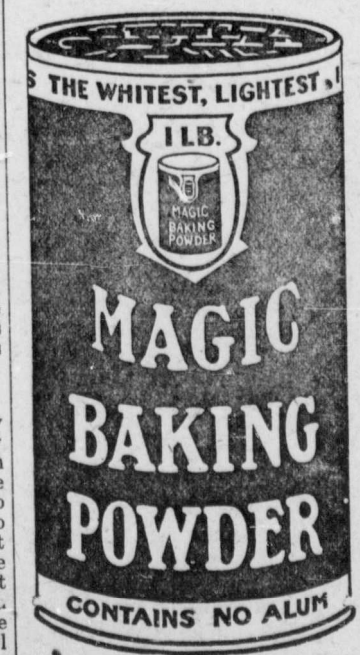
God rest ye, little children; but nothing you affright;
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was born this happy night;
Along the hills of Galilee the white flocks sleeping lay,
When Christ, the Child of Nazareth, was born on Christmas day.

"Little children"—therein lies the secret of all the happiness and merriment of this blessed season. What if later days with their crudeness have demanded illusions? What if we must give up, as the years go on, our belief in Santa Claus, the bestower of gifts upon boys and girls who have been good and faithful during the year. Is anyone of us the worse for having heard in childhood days the sound of the sleigh bells, as the reindeer stopped above the roof and St. Nicholas was heard trudging towards the chimney? Is anyone of us the less a lover of truth for having believed that in a mysterious manner St. Nicholas knew what we wished to find at our place near the hearth on Christmas morning? What if we once believed when we knelt as children before the Christmas Crib, that there really and truly were Jesus and Mary, Joseph and the Shepherds, the Magi and the angels, and that they were all remaining still and quiet so that we might gaze upon the scene of the Blessed Infant's birth?

REASONS FOR BEING MERRY

Well, then, may we be merry this joyous Christmas Day, merry with the thoughts that return to us from our own childhood; merry with the remembrance that those days, indeed, were our happiest ones; merry with the renewed love for our fellowmen the Christmas message arouses in our hearts. Well, then, may we be merry as we realize that to us is given the rare privilege of helping the Church to restore all things to the Infant Christ of Bethlehem. Our Holy Mother, the Church of Christ, is looking out from Bethlehem today upon the Dark Rosaleen of this world, with the same eyes that have watched its perilous progress through twenty centuries, the very soul within her breast wasted for those who are suffering and are heavily burdened these days of joy and gladness. And, if necessary, she would scale the blue air, she would plough the high hills, she kneels all night in prayer, to heal our many ills. To us, her children, hand-in-hand around the Crib of the Infant Christ, she looks to take up the angels' song, the Christmas hymn of glory to God and peace to men, and to make it resound from one end of our beloved land to the other, for this is the month and this the happy morn.

Wherein the Son of Heavens' eternal King



Of wedded maid, and virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring.
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That He our deadly forfeit should release,
And with His Father work us a perpetual peace.

Spend Christmas in Algonquin Park

AGAIN the Christmas season approaches with all its joys and problems. Why not have a real holiday this Christmas, have each member of the family bring out his snowshoes, skates and skis, pack up his warm sports togs and all his away to Algonquin Park for the festive season? This will eliminate the problem of the Christmas Party and everyone will have a rollicking good time.

The Park lies up in the Ontario Highlands at an altitude of 2,000 feet above sea level and in winter is a veritable fairyland. The very air is a tonic and the climate is ideal for all out-of-door sports. The chief attractions are snow-shoeing, skating, skiing, tobogganing and sleighing, while there are also picnics in the woods, fishing through the ice and other delights innumerable.

A special Christmas dinner is served at Highland Inn, there is a Christmas tree and festivities in keeping with the season. Any Agent of Canadian National Railways will supply you with descriptive booklet, "Winter in Ontario Highlands."

Why Men "Crack" When on the Highway to Success



What Do These Things Tell You?

"SLEEPLESSNESS," Doctor Kennedy tells us, "is one of the commonest signs of nervousness. Another is physical unrest. You are showing signs of nervousness when you cannot keep from twitching your eyebrows, shrugging your shoulders, swinging one foot when your legs are crossed; or when you cannot sit at a desk or table without continually tapping with the fingers."

"The nervous man very often finds that he cannot concentrate on one task, but continually goes from one thing to another. He is also very apt to lose interest in the work and recreations that formerly gave him pleasure. And he is easily fatigued. Nervous fatigue is most commonly indicated by a constant feeling of tiredness around the head."

THE worry and strain of recent years has been too much for many business and professional men who have not been able to break away from the details and anxieties associated with their occupations.

In a moment you will recall many who have broken down suddenly just when they appeared to be in their prime.

Some have had their lives snuffed out while others have lingered as invalids, lacking the energy and nerve force necessary for the pursuit of their vocations.

The warning symptoms as outlined above by Dr. Kennedy in the American Magazine for October are well worth a careful study, because with this knowledge you can then detect the indications of failing nervous energy while yet there is time to prevent serious results.

A few days away from the scene of

your worries, rest and moderate exercise in the open will help to get you started on the way to better health. Your recovery will be greatly hastened by the use of Dr. Chase's Nerve Food.

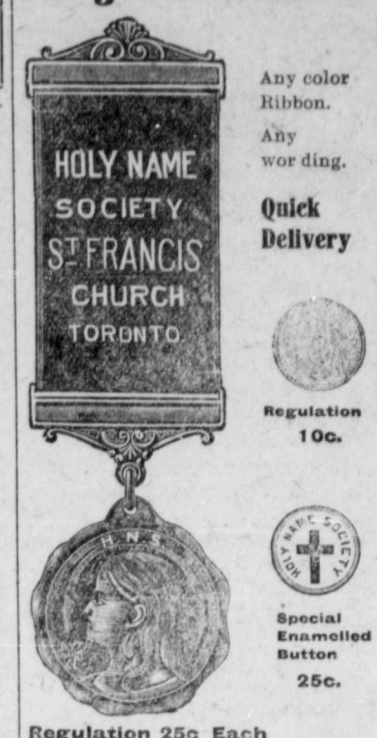
Your digestive system has failed to supply proper nourishment to the nervous system. And when thus exhausted the nerves fail to control the digestive fluids of the stomach. On this account outside help is necessary, such as Dr. Chase's Nerve Food, before you can get back your strength and vigor.

You will not be using this restorative treatment long before you will find yourself sleeping and resting better. And this is what you need above all else. The old energy and vigor will be felt throughout your system and you will be encouraged to keep up this reconstructive treatment until you feel entirely yourself again.

Dr. Chase's Nerve Food

50c a box, all dealers or Edman son, Bates & Co., Ltd., Toronto.

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Solve this puzzle and win a CASH PRIZE. There are 6 faces in the picture besides the two Campers. Can you find them? If so, mark each one with an X, cut out the picture, and write on a separate piece of paper these words, "I have found the faces and marked them," and mail same to us with your name and address. In case of ties, handwriting and answers will be considered factors. If correct we will advise you by return mail of a simple condition to fulfill. Don't send any money. You can be a prize winner without spending one cent of your money. Send your reply direct to: GOOD HOPE MANUFACTURING COMPANY, 275 CRAIG STREET WEST, MONTREAL, CANADA.