

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

LOW SUNDAY

FAITH AND SKEPTICISM

"If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. For this is the testimony of God, which is greater, because He has testified of His Son. He that believeth in the Son of God hath the testimony of God in himself." 1 John v. 9, 10.

God made man in such a way that he depends, to a great extent, upon others for his knowledge. He cannot acquire it intuitively; but, by patient labor and listening, it is engrained in him. This in itself would be sufficient proof of how far below Himself has the Maker placed man, the noblest of His earthly creatures.

God is omniscience. No creature can possess this attribute; consequently, even though an individual be capable of acquiring a knowledge of many things, there still remains an infinite amount of which he can know nothing, while dwelling in the flesh.

As regards temporal things, man shows but little skepticism when told of the things of which he hitherto knew little or nothing; but, with many, it is a different question when an attempt is made to impart to them a knowledge of the things of God. It is true that faith is necessary for a proper and sufficient knowledge of God here below, and this faith is infused by God in those who possess this greatest of earthly blessings. Many place their own minds against that of their Creator, and refuse to believe anything they cannot understand, or which human knowledge—either their own or that of others—can not teach them.

They may become learned, to a great extent, in the sciences of earth, and manifest signs of great education. But they are not lifted thereby above the things of this world; and, as long as they remain in this state—no matter how meritorious their lives may be from a natural standpoint—they can not acquire one whit of merit before God.

Belief in God is necessary before all else; and even those who profess no belief in Him, during life, unconsciously reap, ever and anon, the fruits of His beneficent existence and presence even in the world. It is pride—the cause of the fall of both angels and men—that keeps them aloof from their Master. A natural outcome of pride is a feeling of self-sufficiency, and very often Satan aids one to feel, at least, that he can and does exist without the help of God. It is one of his clever ways of deceiving man, and of causing him to walk on an apparently elevated plane, but from which, in the end, he will slip to an abyss of misery. Every mortal is a creature of God, belongs to Him, and, sooner or later, must abandon helplessly into the hands of God that which now appears as sufficiency.

This belief in God also is easy—considering the great blessings God has bestowed upon us, not only by creating us and enabling us to share in His happiness, but also by redeeming us from our bondage by the sufferings and death of His own beloved Son. Herein is contained the greatest exhibition of truth and sincerity that man ever could witness. Ages come, ages go, but man remains ever the same. With the aid and help of the knowledge of past generations, and that of the present great age with its discoveries and inventions adding immeasurably to the conveniences of life, he is not brought one step higher in a spiritual sense, if he refuses belief in God, and neglects the duties he owes to Him. In fact, all these things, wrongly interpreted by many, have been the means of continuously distancing great numbers from God. In the narrowness of their comprehension and the pride of their lives, they have believed, and still believe, that happiness will consist in perfecting these benefits to man, and this to come about with God eliminated from the process.

It is true that since the coming of the Son of God, more believe than did before His advent. Yet, through the wicked schemes and designs and pride of various heresies, the faith in Him has been blighted, and its bright glow, in the case of many, still refuses to shine forth. The unsullied faith of the early Christians has not come down through the centuries to all in its purity. The various influences antagonistic to it have not been without results, and now it is difficult to find the simple faith of the ancient true lovers of Christ. Of course, this is said mainly of people outside of the pale of the Catholic Church, but, even within her most sanctified walls, there are many who stand aloof, pass judgment on her doctrines and practices, and offer her a very unwilling obedience.

But the testimony of centuries stands by her and with her. The impress of God's goodness and help is evident upon her, and her great sanctifying influence attested to by the lives of millions of her children. Yet, in the face of it all, there is but too often to be found a weakling bearing the name of "Catholic." It is sad to think that such should be the condition of some within the Church, yet it is not surprising for, if the good Master Himself had to bear insults and ingratitude, can the Church, His spouse, expect to be free of sorrow?

Will man ever try to master the lesson that he needs God—whether he pretends to realize it or not? His very existence is due to God; his present and his future are in God's hands. His knowledge—no matter how comprehensive—is but a slight spark of God's infinite knowledge; and if he expects happiness beyond this life, it can be only in a share of the very happiness of God.

ALL THINGS MUST PASS AWAY

It is written on the sunshine As it glides the shining dome, It is written on the joyous smile That lights the hearth of home, It is written on all fairest things Beneath the sun's bright ray That all was made for one brief hour But all must pass away.

It is written on the rosebud leaf E'er yet its time appear, It is written on the smiling spring That cheers the coming year, That they may live and flourish Alas but for a day, But soon their beauty, too, must fade, For they must pass away.

It is written on those dreary clouds O'er life's sad ocean cast, When sinks the weak and weary soul 'Neath strong temptation's blast; Even of those shadows darkly spread O'er sweetest Lord did say: Oh blessed art thou mournful one, Thy tears shall pass away.

It is written, oh poor trusting heart, On all you love and prize On those dear friends whose every glance

In thy heart's casket lies, That they must not forever bide Beneath this life's dark day Too bright, too glad for this dull earth They must all pass away.

Soon thou must learn to miss that voice Sweet music to thine ear, And lose that dear approving smile That cheered thine exile here. Ah yes too surely must they go, For God on earth did say: My Word alone shall last forever All else must pass away.

Then why repine when all seems lost In this life's narrow span? Why sink beneath the heavy cross The daily load of man? Ah turn aside thy wistful gaze From things that cannot stay, And haste thee on to that fair land That shall not pass away.

NOTE.—The foregoing poem is published at the request of an old subscriber who learned it by heart some fifty years ago and now transcribes it from memory.

LEAGUE OF LITTLE FLOWER

AIDS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN RURAL DISTRICTS

The League of the Little Flower of Our Country Schools, an organization unique in its aims and methods so far as is known, has just rounded out its first year with such success that it may become a national model. Operating as an archdiocesan organization, in its one year of life it has raised \$9,000 in memberships for the construction and maintenance of country parish schools where the Catholic communities could support them only in part, or not at all. In addition, it has put special plans of rural religious education into effect with gratifying results.

The Most Rev. Michael J. Curley, Archbishop of Baltimore, is the director and greatest friend of the League. Recently he announced that he would not be content until there was a Catholic school in every parish in his spiritual jurisdiction. Father W. H. Bishop, pastor of the Catholic Church, Clarksville, Md., is spiritual director, and Father Henry D. Collins is assistant spiritual director for Baltimore and Washington.

Members of the League are enlisted from all walks of life by means of letters and pulpit announcements, and gifts to the cause, of varying size, admit their names to the lists. Priests who are members say a Mass a year for the membership, and Sisters and Brothers and many lay members receive Holy Communion periodically for the success of the League.

Religious vacation schools and correspondence schools are promoted, in addition to contributing to the Archbishop's budget for rural school work. Correspondence schools have attained marked success, and the second class the League has prepared for First Communion in this manner is now ready for the Sacrament. The plan is to hold a three day retreat at the close of the courses, and here the children to whom the emergency training has been applied have compared favorably in their religious knowledge with those prepared at regular schools.

Courses of study prepared by the Right Rev. Mgr. Victor Day, of Helena, Mont., for use by the Catholic Rural Life Bureau, a unit of the N. C. W. C. Department of Social Action, are used in the

correspondence courses. In fact, the League works in close cooperation with the Rural Life Bureau. Father Bishop, who has active charge of the promotion of the League and its work, launched the project shortly after he had attended the St. Louis convention of the Catholic Rural Life Conference, where he was sent by Archbishop Curley as the archdiocesan representative.

"There is special necessity to establish good Catholic Schools in the country districts, because the country people are the feeders of the cities," says Father Bishop. "Industrialism is crushing the home in the city, but in the country, a man's work and his home are not two separate units, as they are in the cities.

"These rural homes must be protected. In the country there are fewer obstacles to morality than in the industrial centers. The solid advantages here must be retained and assisted and spiritualized by religion. Religious centers are necessary, and for this purpose the parish school is best. From these schools the correspondence courses and vacation school instructors may be sent out, covering the rest of the field.

"If we can establish a great system of religious education in the country, we can bring a Christian civilization. Here people are closer to the essentials of life. Children are taught to be responsible, from an early age. The discipline of the farm home is superior to that of the city home. These are ideal elements for the promotion of a religious life.

"The farm home is the great natural novitiate of life. Hence it must be permeated by religion. Religious schools will spiritualize and elevate it to a still higher plane."

STATE RELIGION

IS REPORTED AIM OF TURKEY'S RULER

By Dr. Frederick Funder (Vienna Correspondent, N. C. W. C.)

Turkey, long the protagonist and chief defender of Mohammedanism, is making a deliberate effort under Kemal Pasha to wipe out the Islamic religion of the Prophet and substitute therefore a State controlled religion, the chief characteristic of which is to be an intense nationalism. Such, in substance, is the startling report of the meaning brought back by a distinguished diplomat who has held important posts in Turkey and other parts of the Levant for more than twenty years. This diplomat, whose name, could it be mentioned, would be recognized as a famous Orientalist, in a recent interview with the N. C. W. C. News Service representative said:

"The opinion of the present reformers of Turkey is that the Mohammedan religion is to be blamed for all the misfortunes and posts in Turkey and other parts of the Levant for more than twenty years. This diplomat, whose name, could it be mentioned, would be recognized as a famous Orientalist, in a recent interview with the N. C. W. C. News Service representative said:

"As a matter of fact, the actions of the government correspond with these views. Prince Metternich, one of the greatest statesmen of the first half of the last century, once said in a memorandum to Czar Nicholas I.: 'Religious spirit is the main foundation of Turkey's social organization. This fundamental is now being turned upside down. It seems that no stone will be left standing of the old structure of Islam. It is gratifying that polygamy has been abolished but this is of little real consequence because, in practice, the great masses of the Turkish people have long been monogamous, the keeping of harems with more than one wife being the social privilege of the rich.

"It is of much more significance, however, that the new Turkish State is trying to establish what might be called a Turkish National Church. An alteration of religion and religious exercises is being attempted. The daily ablutions now prescribed for Mohammedans are to be done away with, church-going restricted, the Koran schools, formerly maintained by the larger mosques for the training of the lower Islamic clergy, have been suppressed and the students of theology are now assembled in a General Seminary at Constantinople in which doctrines dictated by the State are taught. A revision and reform of the Koran and the teachings of Mohammed compiled by Abu Bekr, first Caliph of the seventh century, is now in progress. The 'Vakuf' or Mohammedan church property has been confiscated and the income diverted to the civil authority. Mosques and priests formerly supported by this property are now dependent upon the mercy of the State. Methods identical with those employed by the absolutist rulers of Europe in their efforts to control the Church in the eighteenth century are being employed in Turkey today."

CATHOLIC SITUATION ALLEVIATED

After pointing out that the reformers are making considerable progress in the cities but very little headway in rural districts, the diplomat went on to say:

"The sharp measures taken by the government in the beginning against Catholic mission schools have been fortunately alleviated through the efforts of Monsignor Dolci, the Papal Delegate. As is well known, all Christian schools were closed last year because the government ordered the removal of crosses from the class rooms. However, most of the schools were reopened last fall. In those institutions where there are only Catholic pupils the crosses are retained in all rooms. In schools attended by children of various denominations the class rooms to which children of all sects are admitted do not have the crosses. The schools, however, allowed to retain the crosses above the entrance doors, in the rooms of the school officials and in the class rooms where Catholic religious instruction is given."

SLOVAKIANS PLEDGE LOYALTY TO POPE

The third anniversary of the coronation of Pope Pius XI. was made the occasion for an elaborate demonstration manifesting the loyalty of Czecho-Slovakian Catholics to the Holy See. Representatives of the principal Catholic organizations as well as prominent members of the Hierarchy called upon the Papal Nuncio, Monsignor Marzaggi, to present their message of loyalty and felicitation to him as the representative of the Pope. The Nuncio responded as follows:

"As the Holy Father's representative in Czecho-Slovakia, I bring to the Catholic people here three messages: First, the message of Prayer. Let the Catholics here be assured that the Holy Father does not forget them, and that he thinks of them in his prayers, and that he follows with interest their brave struggle for a holy cause.

Then, the message of Love. When I was sent to this country, the Holy Father expressed his love for your beautiful country and his desire that the entire nation might benefit by the Catholic religion.

"Third, I bring you the message of Hope. Do not lose courage. Remember the words: 'Thou art Peter...' and the saying 'Petrus non moritur.'"

Archbishop Kordatch, Metropolitan of Prague, expressed the sentiments of the Czecho-Slovakian Catholics and referred to the situation in France as follows: "In the name of all the faithful Catholics of Czecho-Slovakia we declare that we join the whole Catholic world in filial love and attachment to the Successor of St. Peter. Therefore, our sympathies follow the French Catholics and not the French Lodge. We sympathize with the 'Elder' Daughter of the Catholic Church and not with the daughter of the French Revolution. 'Today's manifestation pays homage to the Holy Father's protection of international rights and of true liberty against both tyranny and anarchy, to his unremitting labor for reunion of all Christians from East and West that there may be one fold and one shepherd and also that there may be the Peace of Christ in the Reign of Christ.'"

Monsignor Podlaha, Auxiliary Bishop of Prague, paid tribute to the benefits conferred upon the Czech Kingdom in ancient times by the Catholic Church beginning with the arrival of the first missionaries, Sts. Cyril and Methodius. He also recalled the efforts of the Catholic clergy, chiefly members of the Jesuit Order, in resisting attempts by the Hapsburg Emperors to suppress the Czech language and literature.

"We are unaware what is going to happen to us," the Bishop concluded. "We do not know whether we shall suffer persecution from the State or not. But we know one thing very well; whatever happens we shall remain faithful to the faith of our fathers."

At the conclusion of the demonstration the Papal Nuncio imparted the Apostolic Blessing and all present joined in singing the Papal Hymn.

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