

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

By Rev. M. POISSANT

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

WHAT DETERS MANY FROM SEEKING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In their anxiety about the things of this life, many people forget all that lies beyond it, and act in a way altogether contrary to our Lord's doctrine that we read in to-day's Gospel. He bids us "seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all other things shall be added unto you." That we may avoid the mistakes made by such deluded persons, let us consider what it is that deters men from seeking the kingdom of God. There are two chief things, very unlike one another, viz., avarice and an excessive love of ease. They are diametrically opposed, and yet produce the same result, for both hinder men from seeking the kingdom of God. We must be careful to steer our way so as to avoid both dangers, as either would be enough to prevent us from ever reaching our goal.

1. We must be on our guard against avarice; for our Saviour says: "You cannot serve God and Mammon."—An avaricious person is always thinking of his temporal possessions and of money-making. His heart cleaves to earth and cannot rise towards heaven. He takes no interest in prayer, has no good intentions, does not offer up his works and occupations to God, and is careless about hearing Mass. He reads no spiritual books and takes part in no religious conversation, all his thoughts and words are devoted to money making and hoarding. He is too worldly-minded to pray or attend public worship frequently, and when he attempts to pray, his heart is so full of temporal concerns that he pronounces the words with his lips, thinking nothing of their import, or he is present in body at Mass, whilst his mind is occupied with plans and anxieties connected with his business. How blind and foolish he is! How will he fare when his earthly life is over? He will look back at his wealth and the excessive pains spent upon its acquisition, pains which left him no time for serving God, and he will have to acknowledge that all has been in vain. Let us never be so blind! Let us never permit such fatal avarice and love of money to take root in our hearts, but let us rather seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, knowing that then all else will be added to us.

2. Secondly, we must be on our guard against overbearing desire of ease and amusement. Where such a desire exists, there is no thought of God, no prayer, no attendance at instructions and no reception of the Sacraments. The more you care for luxury, the more you turn your attention to the pleasures of eating and drinking, to fine clothes, to entertainment and dances, the less interest will you take in the things of God, and the less pleasure will you find in His worship. No man can serve two masters, and he who is a friend to this world, is God's enemy.

How many Christians are infected with this evil love of luxury, and aim at nothing but material comfort, enjoyment and amusement, and the gratification of their sensual desires! Their hearts refuse to admit any serious or religious thought, being filled with love of the world and its delights. Sunday is to them no longer the Lord's day, but a holiday, set apart for merry-making. If they go to church, it is not to pray and worship God, the Lord of heaven and earth, but to show themselves in their fine clothes, which are often very unsuitable or even immodest. During Mass they think only of the vanities and amusements in which they intend to indulge later in the day. They spend as little time as possible at church, and grumble at having to go there, where they stay as long as they can at places of amusement, and are very loath to come away.

You, who love the vain and perishable joys of this world so passionately as to forget God, and even to dislike the very thought of Him, how great is your folly! Your joys will pass away like smoke, your bodies will decay like fading flowers, and your life will soon be over, like a dream in the night. When you awaken from it, you will have to stand before the judgment seat of God—and what excuse will you plead then? No one will enter the kingdom of God who has not sought it here on earth. Let us therefore refrain from everything that might hinder us from seeking it: let us put aside all attachment to worldly delights, and serve God with quiet perseverance and zeal. He will not let us want for happiness; and that which He bestows is far better, truer, sweeter and purer than any enjoyed by the lovers of the world. Amen.

BEARING ONE'S CROSS

Everybody in this world has a cross of some kind to bear. It may be one lying unseen in the silence of the heart's profoundest depths; or it may be one that is painfully visible to all. To some God gives but one great cross to bear; on others He showers what seems like a multitude of smaller ones. But, great or small, or one or many, the cross is there, and must be carried.

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and discontent; others with the soft blossoms of patience and hope. It is largely a matter of choice, resting with the bearer; but it is the revelation of our experience that he finds his cross lightest who has learned—bitter though the lesson is—to smile with others at his own miseries.—The Western World.

INHABITANTS ON MARS ONCE MORE

During the past few weeks, the newspapers have been announcing that Marconi, the distinguished inventor of practical wireless telegraphy, feels sure that he has been receiving strange signals on his wireless apparatus, which as far as he can judge, did not originate on the earth. Straightway, Mr. Nikola Tesla is quoted as believing that these may be messages from Mars. Of course the newspaper world is further agog with the possibility of this new source of news for their columns, and there follows a whole series of editorial comments. As Nikola Tesla put in a claim nearly thirty years ago, in 1889, that he was receiving messages from a not too distant planet, probably Mars, though Mars is never nearer to the earth than some 35,000,000 miles, it is easy to understand that he is prompt to accept and glad to claim this confirmation, as it were, of his announcement of a generation ago.

As a consequence of this agitation the whole subject of the possibility of inhabitants on Mars will surely come up for consideration once again, so that it would seem well for us to know what are the latest scientific conclusions with regard to the matter. For we are now in a much better position to know something about the possibility of life on Mars, than we were even a few years ago. Life, as far as we know anything about it, cannot exist without oxygen and water, and very careful observations seem to disclose the fact that there is not enough of either of these substances on Mars to support life. The announcement made a generation ago that there were canals on Mars, and that these indicated the presence of beings not very unlike ourselves, though of a much superior order of intelligence and power over nature, disturbed a number of people and even made not a few feel that as there was no provisions in their religious ideas for such a possibility, perhaps this so-called discovery militated against old-fashioned religious principles. Of course that feeling was but a vague dread on the part of people whose religion was evidently not very solid, nor deeply founded, yet it existed, and it is interesting to note that science eventually dissipated it entirely.

Dr. Svante Arrhenius, the distinguished Swedish scientist, who received the Nobel prize in chemistry, some fifteen years ago, as a fitting reward principally for his achievements in the electro-chemical field, has, in recent years, been devoting himself to the universe rather than to the atom and the molecule. His last book, published a year ago, is called "The Destinies of the Stars."

The Swedish edition was issued in 1915, but the American translation has the advantage of some additions made by Dr. Arrhenius as late as 1917, so that his conclusions are very well considered to be thoroughly up-to-date. Arrhenius is very positive in his conclusions and does not hesitate to deny all possibility of the existence of living beings at

least like those we know on Mars. In one very striking passage he declares:

"It must now be evident that we should consider Mars as unfit to harbor living beings. There is possibly a slight amount of oxygen in the thin air, but the extremely low temperature and the scant supply of water vapor form insurmountable obstacles to the subsistence of even the simplest forms of life in the equatorial regions on Mars. The temperature difference between day and night must be enormous on account of the desert climate. Even if life could develop during the day, which has nearly the same duration as with us—Lowell fixed it at 24 hours, 37 minutes, 22.6 seconds—and during which the temperature possibly might rise above the freezing point, it would nevertheless be destroyed without mercy by the bitter frost at night.

Well, but what of the canals, then? Some of the astronomers pronounce them optical illusions, an idea which is probably contradicted by photographs, but most of them have come now to think of the reputed canals as cracks or fissures in the surface of Mars. As in the crust of the earth, they generally run in nearly straight lines or in regularly bent curves. Flammarion, who has been one of those most emphatic in assertions both with regard to inhabitants on Mars and other phenomena similar to those of the earth, contends that fissures do not have the rectilinear configurations of the Martian canals. Arrhenius declares that this is entirely an error and demonstrates it by a map which he reproduces. There is such a great fissure on the earth, following the coast of Chili from Africa to the Strait of Magellan, in a nearly north and south direction, for a distance of over 2,200 miles. This fissure is almost as long as the distance from the equator to the North Pole, and has some times been held by its very length to contradict the idea that it could possibly be a fissure or crack such as occurs on the surface of the earth. The longest earthquake crack, along the entire length of which a dislocation took place at one time, was that which preceded the violent shock in California in 1900. This was some 376 miles in length. Such cracks exist along the entire coast of the Pacific Ocean but usually very close to the ocean itself, and many of them are evidently lost beneath the water. According to Arrhenius:

"We are consequently obliged to revise in their entirety our ideas about Mars. The belief that organic life, green vegetation, causes the color of the so-called seas on Mars, as assumed by Lowell, or that the red tints belong to the gorgeous dunes in which autumn arrays the plants before their leaves are shed under the attack of frost, as intimated by Flammarion, must nowadays take its place in the shadowy realm of dreams.

The Swedish scientist has his ideas also with regard to the theories that men or beings resembling them, exist on Mars. His discussion of that particular phase of popular astronomy which during the past generation has occupied so much room in the newspapers for current periodicals of all kinds, and which illustrates very well the fact that it is better not to know so much than to know so much that is not so, is interesting enough to deserve quotation:

"The theory that intelligent men exist on Mars is very popular. With its help everything may be explained particularly if we attribute an intelligence vastly superior to our own to these beings, so that we are not always able to fathom the wisdom with which their canals are constructed. The crossings of the latter are said to be cities (Lowell) fifty times greater than London. The trouble with these 'explanations' is that they explain anything, and therefore in fact nothing.

Whence do these signals observed by Marconi come then? His judgment that they surely originate outside of the earth is worthy of consideration. His experience with wireless telegraphy probably puts him in a better position to judge of the provenance of wireless signals than almost any one else alive. They surely do not come from Mars, however, according to the latest conclusions in astronomy, for Mars cannot support life as we know it, and Mars is the only planet supposed to be in such a state as to provide biological conditions that would support life as we know it. There used to be men in the moon until we began to know something about that planet, but they are there no more. If there is somebody signaling to us, it is surely from far outside of our solar system, so that it is not merely a question of millions but probably of billions, at least, or even trillions of miles, over which the signals must come.

On account of the immense electrical difficulties that are thus raised, astronomers and physicists would almost surely insist that the signals must be due to some as yet unexplained or perhaps unrecognized electrical phenomena on the earth itself. They would scarcely resort to very distant heavenly bodies for an explanation.

The whole subject is as yet *sub judice*, but those who want to do so will believe whatever suits them, and those of radical opinions will draw the most far-reaching conclusions from the ideas which they accept and announce these conclusions as thoroughly scientific. Science has a way of turning her back on her votaries that is very disturbing. She is a gay jilt and no

wonder that the feminine pronouns are used in connection with her. There is only one thing to be said:—let us wait and see. (The delay may be long, perhaps even some hundreds of years; on the other hand the information may come tomorrow or the next day. You can never tell. But the only safeguard against absurdity is to wait until knowledge comes.—James J. Walsh, M. D. Ph. D. in America.

REAL HAPPINESS

"At the moment of death what avail the offices we have held in life, the honors we have enjoyed, the praise, the friendship and the esteem of men? So many we have known are now dead, yet of none of them has it been said: He is happy, for he was a man of lofty intellect; he is happy, for he was a deep theologian. No, but we have said: He is happy, for he was a true and happy religious.—Kather Arsenius, O. F. M.

NEED OF WOMEN WHO WILL DEFY FASHION

The French Catholic weekly *Nouvelles Religieuses*, has inaugurated a campaign against the present day fashion in women's dress.

"For 1900 years," says our contemporary, "the Church has protested through the mouth of her preachers and the pen of her writers against immodest fashions. For 1900 years these preachers have deplored the fatality of their protests. The prophets and the Old Law had much to say on the subject; so also had St. Paul."

The writer "touches the spot" when he says that neither vanity nor womanhood, but human respect, is the chief reason why so many women follow the fashion of the day, whatever form it may take. Fashion after all, is but another name for human respect. The woman who defies the current fashion defies human respect, and is in very sooth a valiant woman. What we need is a society formed of such valiant women who would stand united against any fashion that imperilled the Christian ideal of womanhood or deprived women of their dignity.

"A Christian woman," rightly says the Universe, "should be at pains to secure grace and dignity for her wearing apparel. Carelessness or absence of thought as to her exterior have never been advocated, and the excesses of fashion are to be met by something positive—as dominating as fashion, but as far removed from caprice as the latter is allied to it. The voice of the preacher and the protest of the religious writer can neither of them avail unless the ordinary woman realizes that she has unconsciously become the dupe of a thing evil in intention and prolific of evil results."

The moral of the whole thing is clear, comments the *Mt. Angel Magazine*, from which we quote. Before the vain and immodest woman is converted, the virtuous woman who lacks the moral courage to defy

fashion must be made to realize the extent of her action in acquiescing in a form of tyranny which, to put it in its mildest form, lowers the dignity of womanhood.—Buffalo Echo.

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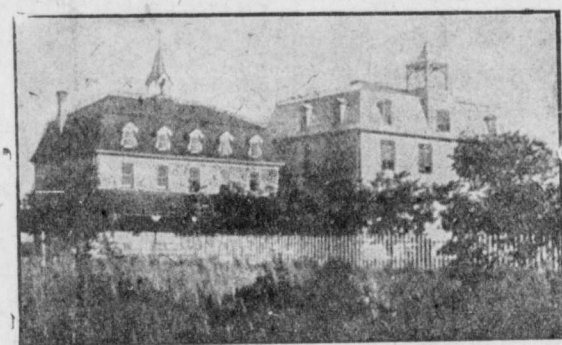
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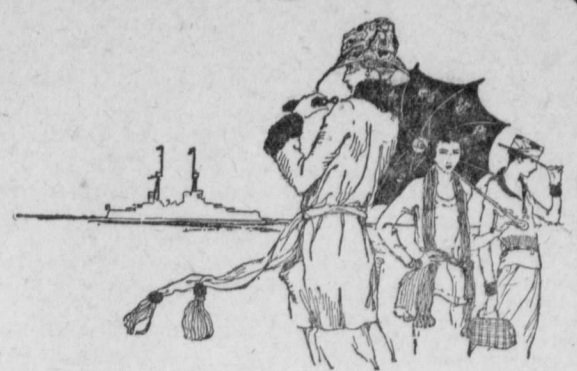
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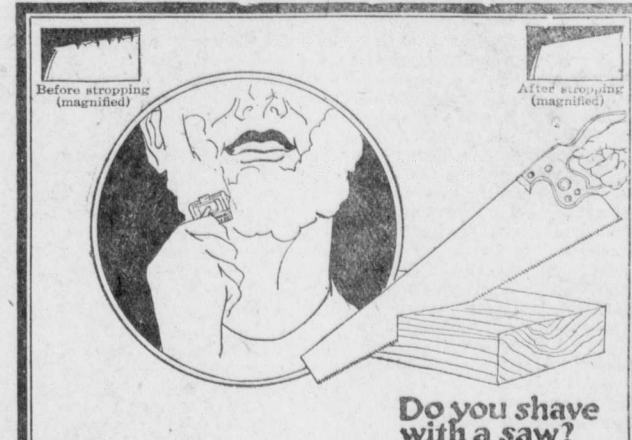
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