

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

"Now I go to Him that sent Me, and none of you asketh Me 'Whither goest Thou?'" John xvi. 7.

Our Lord announced to His disciples the approaching completion of His work of redemption. "Now I go to Him that sent Me," I am about to die, and after My death I shall return to My Father, rejoicing at having accomplished the work which I was sent into the world to do. You do not realize that this fulfillment of My task is fraught with happiness for you; you are only sad because I am leaving you, and therefore you do not ask which I am going; you do not consider that I shall be in heaven where I am destined, as Man and Redeemer, to sit at My Father's right hand and make intercession for you.

As Man and Redeemer Jesus has fulfilled His destiny, and how much this ought to encourage us to attain to ours!

Many people live on, year after year, without ever asking: "Whither are we going? What is our allotted task?" It is, however, man's privilege to know what his task is, and to exert his free will in order to accomplish it. We ought always to keep our end in view, so that each day, hour and minute of our life may carry us onward towards the glorious goal for which we were created. We are destined for an eternity of happiness. "God will have all men to be saved" (I. Tim. ii, 4) says the Apostle, and the happiness that we are to enjoy is so great, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (I. Cor. ii, 9). For such eternal happiness it is surely worth while to abandon and renounce the trifling delights of this world, in as far as they are sinful. If we could see heaven and all the joys awaiting us there, we should ask ourselves, "Why do you care so much about what appears pleasant on earth? Why are you discontented when things here do not go according to your desires? Cannot you do without a few things and deny yourself a little for the sake of obtaining such unspeakable bliss? The pleasure that sin affords is a pitiful thing, soon passing away and leaving behind it nothing but remorse and shame, and would you barter for it an eternity of happiness? Your love of comfort, your lukewarmness and indolence are mean, miserable things. Why do you care nothing for your everlasting rest? You think more of a despicable piece of selfishness, or a ridiculous display of vanity, or even of indulgence in bad temper, than you do of the joys of heaven. You fancy that it is impossible to resist this or that craving, and no sooner have you yielded to it than you feel, with bitter sorrow, that you have forfeited Paradise for a brief, deceptive pleasure. Would that heaven and all its joys, would that the happiness for which we are destined, were ever before our eyes! We should not sin so recklessly, or yield so readily to earth's allurements but we should here in this world enjoy peace of mind and a good conscience.

We are destined, as St. Paul says, one day to see God face to face, and to know even as we are known, but we shall never be worthy to behold Him, unless even now the most ardent desire of our heart is to know Him aright. Faith teaches us to know God, and without faith no one can hope to go to heaven. May our faith remain sacred to us until we draw our last breath. May all that we learn and experience be regarded by us in the light of faith, i. e., may we refer it all to God, and employ it in learning to know Him better. Let us never waver in our faith, but never be infected with the spirit of worldliness which cares for everything but God. Let us cherish a firm and steadfast faith in God, for thus we shall become worthy one day to behold Him and, as the Apostle says, to enjoy Him, to find unspeakable happiness in loving Him whose love alone is able fully to satisfy the heart of man. This is man's destiny, this is the highest possible bliss, but this love must at least begin on earth, for only a heart that has lived for God in this world will live in Him in the world to come.

Love of God is displayed in obedience to Him. The better we love Him, the more ready and joyful will be our obedience. If He one day asks us whether we had loved Him on earth, we shall answer with gladness proportionate to the humility and fidelity with which we have done our duty, to the number of good works that we have performed, and to the amount of self-restraint that we have practised out of love of Him. The genuineness of our love will be proved in this way and by the solidity of the virtues that we have acquired; not by the number of fine speeches that we have made, or of pious books that we have read. We ought to love God not only in word and with our emotions, but in deed and in truth. We are destined some day to join the company of those blessed spirits, who stand before the throne and never cease their worship of God. Let us now prepare ourselves to fulfil this glorious duty by means of prayer, for prayer alone will furnish us with the grace of faith, will strengthen us to disregard the things of earth and to overcome temptations to sin, and will help us to be faithful in good works. Thoughtful prayer, proceeding from hearts earnestly desirous of salvation, brings us even now closer to God, and will some day unite us for ever with Him. Therefore let us pray without ceasing, as the Apostle bids us, but pray with a heart full of

good will really to accomplish the task, for which our prayer obtains us strength.

We know whether our Lord has gone; He is in heaven, preparing a place for us. We know, too, whether He wishes us to go—also to heaven, to be happy with Him for ever. When in the common-place round of our everyday life we are tempted to forget our high calling, let us ask ourselves, "Whither ought I to go?" The answer will be, "To heaven, by faith, avoidance of sin, a life of virtue and incessant prayer." Amen.

TEMPERANCE

THE PRIEST AND TEMPERANCE

There is room for difference of opinion as to the relative merits of license, local option, anti-saloon and prohibition legislation as a means of checking or repressing the evils of drink, writes Rev. M. A. Lambing in the "Catholic Temperance Advocate." From principle or policy, honest men, scientists or Christians may have sufficient reasons for refusing to encourage any or all of these measures. But no such person can have a sufficient reason for opposing or for not supporting the total abstinence movement recommended by the Catholic Church and fostered by her hierarchy. It benefits the Church, the state and the individual in every way and in no way injures anyone. No evidence other than that which meets one who opens his eyes and looks about him is needed to convince the unbiased mind that drink is the worst enemy the Church has in this country, not in itself, perhaps, but in opening the way to almost every other enemy and inviting its assault. And whatever assails the Church injures the individual and the state; whatever fosters vice increases crime. The state can prosper, no more than the individual, without the safeguard of religion.

The priest is the salt of the earth, to preserve from corruption those whom Christ has redeemed and added to His Church to be saved. There is no better security for the preservation of the Church and state after God's immediate care than an organized, abstinent priesthood.

One of the hardest labors of the pastor is providing for the financial needs of the parish. All manner of legitimate, and sometimes dubious schemes have to be employed to raise the money needed. The drink bill of the United States averages \$15 for every man, woman and child in the country; Catholics spend their full share of this. There are, in round numbers, 15,000 churches in the United States with an average congregation of 1,100 members whose quota of the drink bill is \$16,500,000, about four times as much as is required to support the parish. It is evident that this sum—the money spent for drink—is worse than wasted. The sin, crime, poverty and suffering caused by drink furnish one-half of the priest's trouble and labor.

The priest must preach temperance and labor to root out the vice of intemperance. Nothing would be greater help to him in this work than membership in the Priests' Total Abstinence League. It would give the utmost force and efficiency to his labor, whether in the confessional, in the pulpit or in the homes of his people; much more than if he were simply an abstainer.

There has never been a time when the minds of so many men and women have consciously or unconsciously turned in the direction of the Catholic Church. And there is nothing more frequently alleged against the Church in this country than the number of Catholics given to drink and engaged in the "dangerous" liquor business. No one thing would meet this objection so well and tend to remove whatever justification there is for it than for it to be generally known that a large and ever-increasing number of the Catholic clergy are members of the Priests' Total Abstinence League. It is not enough that they are temperate or known to be abstainers; it is necessary that they be organized.—St. Paul Bulletin.

TRUE FRIENDSHIP

The dedicatory passage at the close of Cardinal Newman's "Apologia" is sometimes cited as a specimen of almost perfect English, as, indeed, it is. But it is much more than that; it is one of the finest tributes to friendship ever wrung from a great soul. The saying that one's friends are proven by adversity and not by prosperity is so old and has been so many thousand times repeated that to introduce it here smacks of the commonplace. Yet, like many another truism, it will bear repetition. Poor, weak human nature is always forgetting. During our fat years we go on "making friends," as we say—people who take gladly of what we have to give them, but who, when we are touched by the famine of the lean season, pass by upon the other side. This need not, and should not, make us bitter. It is more than likely that we have been paid off in our own coin, and when the accounts have been balanced we find we have one or two real friends remaining, and that is as much as any man ought to ask. They may not often have eaten bread at our tables, possibly because of our gold coinable aversion to their pure and less worthy guests. But we have known where to find them when the

crisis of our lives came, and we have sought them out for comfort and counsel when our burdens pressed hard and our souls grew weary of the strife.

It is this personal note that attunes friendship to everything else in life that is noble and worthwhile. No one has better sounded it than Newman in his dedication, particularly where he apostrophizes the fellow Oratorian who was dearer to him than the rest: "And to you, especially, dear Ambrose St. John, whom God gave me, when He took everyone else away; who are the link between my old life and my new; who have now for twenty-one years been so devoted to me, so patient, so zealous, so tender; who have let me lean so hard upon you; who have watched me so narrowly; who have never thought of yourself, if I was in question." This was the kind of love that Jonathan had for David, whom he called his "own soul," or, I think it is not irreverent to say, that St. John bore our Divine Lord when he leaned upon His breast at supper or stood at the foot of His Cross to drink in his Friend's dying words.

In a recently delivered eulogy that is of interest to Catholics, above others, we have an expression of sacred friendship that is worthier than any I can recall of comparison with Newman's dedication. I refer to the sermon preached by His Grace, the Archbishop of St. Paul, at the funeral of Bishop Scannell of Omaha. Since there is not sufficient space for me to quote it in full, I will give my readers the benefit of a few of the opening sentences. It would be well for us to inscribe them upon the tablets of memory; to say them over again and again, lest our zeal for God should flag or loyalty to our friends wane.

Richard Scannell, you were a friend to me: I was a friend to you. I understood you; you understood me. Your converse was sweetest music to me; mine, I never doubted, was sweetest music to you. The dreadful message that you were dead, agonized my soul, sped around me a void that none other will fill. Without you the journey along life's pathway will be lonely. I shall miss you, as few others of my fellow-travelers would be missed. Fondest is my good-bye; Heaven be your abode; my one-day, mine—with you, for eternity!

Consider, for a moment, the lines: "I understood you; you understood me. Your converse was sweetest music to me; mine, I never doubted, was sweetest music to you." Have you ever heard the mutual understanding of true friendship more beautifully characterized? I have not. It is natural, if we are at all human, that we should wish to let our friends know by outward sign that we love them. Some people, though, are not very human. I recommend such read and ponder the words of his intimates, if he can be said to have had any intimates, had to say of Thorbeak: "As for taking his arm, I would as soon think of taking the arm of an elm tree!"

But however demonstrative we may be, we are obliged to admit that friendship is at its deepest and best in moments of silence: the long walks into the country, when not half a dozen words are exchanged in as many hours; the quiet meal, when one is tired and rests comfortably in the consciousness of sympathy close at hand for the asking; the desultory chat before the open hearth fire, when strong currents make themselves felt beneath the surface flow of placid small talk, when one is serene in assured comradeship and thankful that one is clothed and fed and has a roof, no matter how humble, to shelter him from the blast.—James Loomis in New World.

PREDICTS WAR WILL LEAVE WORLD IN DIRE POVERTY

The Irish Bishops, in their Lenten pastoral letters, direct attention to the necessity for thrift and for raising so much foodstuffs as possible on the farms. There are frequent allusions to the war in the pastorals, the most emphatic exhortation to recruiting appearing in the letter of the Archbishop of Tuam, Dr. Healy, who hopes that while the people will till their fields they will also be ready to fight for them against all comers, especially against the Germans.

"Irishmen are able to fight," he writes, "as they have well proved on every battle front in Europe. They do not want their fertile acres seized by the foe. What is to save them but the strong arms and courageous hearts of the Irish people and their Allies?" He hopes that they will rally to the flag, "not by compulsion, but from a sense of duty as becomes free men."

Cardinal Logue speaks of the war as "not only the greatest and most destructive war in history, but a war that seems to have stirred to their lowest depths the worst and most depraved of human passions. The distinction between soldier and civilian seems to be ignored. Even neutrals and their property are no longer immune from destruction. Peaceful citizens travelling by sea with their wives and children are sent to the bottom without warning. Men, old and young, helpless women and innocent children, often in their beds at night are made victims of a sudden and terrible death."

The Bishop of Limerick, in his pastoral, predicts that the war will leave the world in a condition of dire poverty and speaks of the storm which will break over Euro-

pean society when the war is over. "If any one thinks," he says, "that the millions of working men trained to arms in Europe will settle down peacefully to starvation at the end of the war, in order to help to remass fortunes for their 'betters' he may have a rude awakening."—Providence Visitor.

OUR LADY—QUEEN OF MAY

The month of May is devoted in a special manner to the Mother of God. It is a month set in the sweet of the year—fresh and fragrant with the flowers and showers of spring. Because of its virginal charm it is fittingly consecrated to her whose white virginity was her unique privilege, and who is for us the exemplar of all that is innocent and fresh and pure.

The Church honors Mary as the Virgin-Mother of God with a singular homage. While others refer to her merely as the Virgin, Catholics with a glad human affection know her as the Blessed Virgin—Our Lady. Such an appellation is most in consonance with all tradition regarding her. Was she not hailed "blessed" by the Angel Gabriel, and by Saint Elizabeth? It fulfills literally her own prophecy: "Henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Again, the Church resting its belief on the Scriptures and on the Fathers, has dared to proclaim her Immaculate Conception; that she alone of the race of Adam was preserved free from the stain of original sin. And, rightly regarded, was it not inevitable that the Mother of the Redeemer should never, not even in her origin, have been subject to the sway of Satan, that the human fountain-head of the Incarnate Divine should have been untarnished in its source. So for us she is in truth "the world's and aspirations' one success"—the one perfect flower of humanity, an image of what humanity had been without the fall of man. As a corollary of this privilege there exists in the Church a pious belief, not yet defined as dogma, that her body, as it had never known defilement of sin, was not permitted to corrupt in the grave, but was assumed after death into Heaven. Of the fact of her Assumption Cardinal Newman writes lyrically: "It was meet that He, who died for the world, should die in the world's sight; but she, the Lily of Israel, who had lived out of the gaze of the world, fittingly did she die in the garden's shade and amid the sweet flowers with which she dwelt. Her departure occasioned no noise in the world. The Church went on its usual way; there were persecutions, there were martyrdoms, there were triumphs. At length gradually the news spread abroad that the Mother of God was no longer upon earth. But God was no longer upon earth. If, as pointed out, was empty, and, instead of her pure fragrant body, there was a growth of lilies from the earth." If any one were to object to these privileges as being too special exemptions in her case, might it not be replied that nothing in the life of the Blessed Virgin was ordinary? For was she not greeted, as no other mortal, by the Angel: "Hail full of grace?" and again did she not become Mother of God without ceasing to remain Virgin?

As Virgin and as Mother she stands in a two-fold relation to us—Our Lady and our Mother. As our Lady she is "the Woman," seen in the heavens by the seer of the Apocalypse, "clothed with the Sun, with the Moon beneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." As such she is the Lady of our devotion who represents the appeal of the "eternal feminine" in its best sense, an ideal of dazzling whiteness, and innocence, and purity. In the tales of knight-errantry we read of a certain Sir Galahad whose strength was as the strength of ten because his heart was pure. Such a knight should every Catholic be in the service of our Lady, and he should wear her favor, her scapular, proudly in her honor. And if he will only take her as his exemplar, she will help him to keep himself unspotted from the world. Nowadays most of all there is need of such an ideal; nowadays when the virtue she exemplifies is most often impugned, and the passions are regarded as a law unto themselves, when everywhere the indecency flaunting itself in the press, in the novel, in the theater, on the billboards, brings the flush of shame to an honest cheek; nowadays there is need of her inspiration to keep oneself immune from the shame and infamy of it all. Amid the widespread depravity of a paganism world her influence, if invoked, will make itself felt like some clear well-spring to sweeten one's life and keep it wholesome and pure.

As our mother, she represents all the tender maternal traits of our religion just as the cross represents all its severer features. From the cross we were committed to her in the person of St. John, since when she remains for us "the gentleness that drapes the cross's rigorous austerity." For she will help to lighten the burden of the cross if only we will ask her. So in all trials and afflictions we should have recourse to her as children to a mother, and lay our cares at her feet confident that she will relieve them and soothe them away. Such child-like confidence in her intercession was a mark of the greatest Saints of the Church—of St. Augustine, of St. Dominic, of St. Bernard, who wrote the touching Memorare in her honor. Such faith, too, breathes in that beautiful prayer

of the Church, the Salve Regina, in which she is invoked as Mother of that Mercy which came to redeem the frailty of our first erring mother. And though she is now in her heavenly home, she still has regard for us "poor, banished children of Eve." So we pray to her in hope and confidence "Turn therefore thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus."—Rev. F. M. in The Missionary.

GOD ALONE

"Why do you let saints come between you and God?" asks the Protestant sometimes. But we don't. The great convert, John Henry Newman, found them not about us. In his "Apologia Pro Vita Sua," he writes: "Only this I know full well now, and did not know then, that the Catholic Church allows no image of any sort, material or immaterial, no dogmatic symbol, no rite, no sacrament, no saint, not even the Blessed Virgin, to come between the soul and its Creator. It is face to face, solus cum solo, in all matters between man and his God. He alone creates; He alone has redeemed; before His awful eyes we go in death; in the vision of Him is our external beatitude.

And, after studying the Exercises of St. Ignatius, he wrote: "For here again, in a matter consisting in the purest and most direct acts of religion—in the intercourse between God and the soul, during a season of recollection, of repentance, of good resolution, of inquiry into vocation—the soul was solus cum solo; there was no cloud interposed between the creature and the Object of his faith and love. The command practically enforced was, 'My son, give Me thy heart.'"—The Missionary.

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