

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.
Blessed are you who are meek and lowly of heart, for you shall inherit the earth. (Matthew 5: 5.)

THE INGRATITUDE OF CHILDREN.

We are all debtors, brethren, for we all have some accounts to settle up. There are debts we shall never be able to redeem, debts that are just, pressing, and lasting as long as we are in this life. Such, for instance, is the debt we owe to God.

The fact of His having created us, of having brought us out of nothing, of having given us immortal souls imaged after Himself, would alone put us under the gravest obligations to Him; but what is that compared to the debt we owe God for having redeemed us at a nameless price, by nothing less than the Precious Blood of His own beloved Son; and, furthermore, what is all this in comparison with the debt we owe God for our sanctification, for the priceless gift of His Holy Spirit dwelling within us, breaking away the mist of error and ignorance that clouds our intellect and hides from our vision the eternal truth; that gift that endows us with strength and fortitude, with the courage that comes from conviction, with the power that makes us triumph over every weakness, every unruly passion, every snare of our enemy the devil, every enemy of thought, word, and action that makes us unworthy of sonship with God, brotherhood with Christ, and the heritage of an eternal crown?

This debt, dear brethren, is in general obvious enough; but, while we recognize it, how often do we find in our experience that men neglect, and shamefully neglect, debts that are dependent on and derived from the debt they owe Almighty God; men who neglect debts that are as grave and binding as those which are due to the God from Whom they are derived!

Now, brethren, if there is any injustice in this world more flagrant than all others, more worthy of condemnation and detestation, more certain of the visitation of God, it is this: the neglect of our duty to our parents. "Owe no man anything." Do we owe them nothing? Do we not owe them much? Is there a time in our lives when that debt is not binding?

Ah! dear brethren, and what do we see in the world about us? Ingratitude the vice of monsters, forgetfulness of ties that are nearest, dearest, and holiest. Young men, growing up into adult age, who, in their vain seeking after pleasures, become so blinded to duty, so debased in their appetites, so completely transformed into the incarnation of selfishness, as not only to disregard the law of God, but the very instincts of nature—sons who would rob and starve their parents to satisfy their mean and low appetites.

The ingratitude of children to parents is a crying sin of our times. Let us be alive to it. Let the young men and women of our day remember that they are bound to satisfy these grave and serious obligations; that they are not to heedlessly put themselves into any state that will deprive them from redeeming the debts they owe, from redeeming all the care, toil, and money expended upon them.

"Owe no man anything." Take heed of this warning also, all you who contract debts without the slightest hope of paying them; see to it that the clothes you wear, the food you eat, the pleasures you indulge in are paid for; see to it that they are not purchased by the labor and money which belong to others. You who live in fine houses, who keep yourselves in costly array, who deny yourselves no pleasures, however extravagant, take heed! Who money pays for it? Can you stand up and with a clean heart proclaim that this is honest? As you sit here to-day, do the words of the Apostle offer no rebuke to you, do you not feel their sting?

O brethren! let us be sparing in our debts; let us owe no man anything. The man without debts exalts himself in the eyes of his fellow-men and secures for himself a good conscience.

THE PREACHER ATTENDS.

The Wesleyan mission band has been extremely busy during the past month. Father Stravens gave a series of three missions respectively at Rowlesburg, Newburg and Terra Alta. Father Swint was busy near Parkersburg. After a few days' rest at their headquarters, the Apostolic House, in Parkersburg, they proceeded, by way of Marietta, to Churchtown, Ohio.

Notwithstanding threatening weather and bad roads, we had a splendid opening of the mission on Sunday morning. It was a grand thing to see people gathering from all sides, some strolling over the fields, some trudging through the mud along the roads, others borne in vehicles of every description. By actual count thirty-three buggies, spring wagons, etc., were lined up along the road during Mass. The attendance was gratifying throughout and more than three hundred confessions were heard. This was our first venture outside the diocese. It was a pleasant experience. People and pastor gave us royal hospitality.

On Saturday morning Father Swint was obliged to leave for Roncoverte, W. Va., where he opened a mission on the following Sunday morning. Father Stravens remained and closed the mission at Churchtown, then followed to Roncoverte, where a two weeks' mission will be given, one for Catholics, the other for non-Catholics.

Few people, I suppose, know we have a New England in West Virginia, but we have. It is situated about twelve miles south of Parkersburg, consists of one store, a school house, a Baptist church, and a half dozen houses built on nearly adjoining corners of as many farms. There are two Catholic families practically in the place, and a few others in the neighborhood that ought to be. A sad accident in one of the Catholic families brought the place to the attention of the Parkersburg clergy, and arrangements were made to have Father Swint, of the Diocesan Missionary Band, to hold a mission for non-Catholics. We first tried to procure the Baptist church, but failing in this, we made arrangements

for the school house. The mission was well advertised by means of posters. On the first night about seventy-five were present, all but six or eight non-Catholics. Father Swint took for his subject the "Divinity of Christ." The people were highly pleased. It was the first time many of them heard a priest. On the second evening the room was packed, and people were gathered in the little hallway and outside about the windows. There must have been a hundred and fifty, and this number continued throughout the week. Two persons were crowded on the little benches intended for one child, and boards were laid on benches to furnish seats for others. The subject on Monday evening was "Confession." The people, especially the leaders of the Baptist Church, were again highly pleased, and the next day everybody argued that they also had some kind of confession in their churches. Tuesday evening the subject was "Purgatory." The missionary says that this is the subject that nearly always takes best; here the leaders of the Church were displeased, not that Father Swint said nothing to displease them, but they did not like the doctrine itself. When asked why not, they could give no answer; one lady prominent in the church, could but say, "Well I just was never taught that way. I was always taught that there were only two places." That night this same lady with several others stayed up till after 12 arguing religion. Two or three of the leaders quit coming. However, in the general attendance there was rather an increase than a falling off.

About the middle of the week the question came up of our service colliding with the regular church services there, as it was the Sunday for the minister to be there. He was to have service Saturday and Sunday evening. Father Swint agreed to lecture a half hour later on Saturday, if the church would have its services a half hour earlier and promised to be through before his lecture would begin. When the preacher arrived on Saturday afternoon they must have decided in their business session not to fight us, and agreed to the arrangement for the services. The preacher had the largest crowd that night, I suppose, that he ever had; and when they were through they came over in a body, preacher and all, to the school-house. The subject was the "Church and the Bible." The preacher was almost the first to reach for a book after the lecture, and did so with the expression, "I must have one of these books," uttered with great emphasis. He was back the next day to the closing lecture with all the leaders of his church.

Music throughout the week was furnished by the choir of the Baptist Church, led by one of the deacons of the church.—The Missionary.

WHY I AM A TOTAL ABSTAINER.

Every man endowed with even modest attainments is expected when the occasion demands, to give a reasonable account of the faith that is in him. It will not be out of place, on an occasion of this kind, to answer the question, "Why I am a Total Abster." The time it was startling to see on every side lives wrecked by the curse of strong drink. Men whom I knew to be beloved and admired; brilliant examples of a lofty standard of life, had fallen from their high estate to the lowest condition of degradation. Some of these men I had loved for their honest, whole-souled, rugged ways. But, alas! what a change was soon to be effected! They tried for a while to act the part of their former selves. It was easy to play the hypocrite for a time, but the truth must out, sooner or later. And, oh! what a heart-rending thing it was to the poor simple folks who at one time looked up to them with eyes of profound respect and admiration, and obedience, to see them degraded, and oh, how fallen! It is a sad condition from many points of view. There are relatives who are heartbroken; superiors sorely crushed with disappointment; good, honest people who must bear the brunt of it all in sneers and ridicule. And then the scandal given to the weaker brethren. I saw several such cases in my short experience of social short-comings. Immovable were the cases of a like disorder recounted to me by others. It began to dawn upon me that I was by no means immune from the terrible curse. It was quite possible that I too might turn the engines of salvation into engines of destruction and wreck a host of souls. I did not feel that I was in any proximate danger, in fact, I had a dislike for intoxicants. Beer tasted nauseous to me. Whisky tasted like some burning fluid. Why, then, did I take the pledge? I had in view the possibilities of the past and of the future. Of the past, I do not know; of the future, I am anxious to realize full well that we of today bear in our bodies the penalty of ancestral folly. Heredity is not sneered at to-day by men in a position to know the subject. There is a possibility that in my system lies latent the vice of intemperance which but awaits a little fanning to burst forth into a flame and paralyze my will, making me as truly degenerate as the most chronic drunkard it has been my lot to see. To prevent such a possible catastrophe I mounted the water wagon. But that is only one of the reasons I have to give.

THE INFLUENCE OF EXAMPLE. It is a dangerous thing for a man to speak disparagingly of externalism in religion. Provided a man is consistent in his relations with his brethren and exhibits a well-marked spiritual character, an external expression of piety, provided it be not made ridiculous by singularity or excess, is indeed necessary to keep alive the spirit of piety in himself, and also to edify those with whom he comes into contact. We are all unconsciously influenced by the example of those among whom we constantly move. There is a good deal of a child in every man, and the child is essentially imitative. A man who is firm in his adherence to total abstinence, in all seasons, will in no small degree help to encourage others to practise temperance or abstinence. An any rate he will check by his example possible excesses. This consideration is one that can not be overlooked by any man engaged in the work of saving souls.

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Let us look at it from the point of view of charity. Some of us have a jaundiced, theoretical view of charity that produces few practical results among ordinary flesh and blood. I may endure the shortcomings of Alonzo Robinson to the point of heroism, because deep down in my heart I have a sneaking regard for that worthy; but how do I stand in my relations with Uriah Deadhead? Oh! I endure his short-comings too, but how sparsely veiled is my contempt beneath all my manifestations of charitable toleration! How different would not the world be if we extended the same whole-souled, loving toleration and kindness to the Uriahs as well as to the Alonzos! Our Blessed Lord discussing the same subject one day, scored the Jews for their wrong conception of charity. He said: "Why take credit for a kindness done to one whom you love? Even the heathens do this. But I say to you, Love one another even as I have loved you." Charity to our brethren in Christ is therefore another strong motive impelling me to be an abstainer. I know full well that the cup which cheers to-day might very easily be the vessel of hell's malice to-morrow. Am I then by example, or by a treat, to be one of the contributing factors to possible profligacy, or perhaps wholesale destruction of souls? Surely, this is another reason to induce me to take the pledge.

Did you ever hear a man say, I can take a glass and let it alone? Every drunken outcast in the universe at one time said the same thing, even when in his heart he felt the fetters encircling his mind and will, dragging him down to the level of the dumb beast.

When the silent voice whispered, Let it alone, don't risk it—well, I took the hint and that is another reason why I am an abstainer.—P. T. A. L.

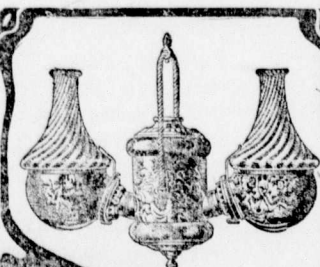
BOSTON.

The following words of Archbishop O'Connell, spoken to New England Catholics at the Boston Catholic Centennial, have the true missionary ring:

"The Catholic opened the door of this stern enemy of his and entered—entered and took his place, and stayed. His lodging was far from comfortable, for he came uninvited and unwelcome. He well knew the suspicion which followed him—well realized the antipathy which surrounded him. It was a double antipathy. The Puritan had for the Catholic of any country little love. For the French and Irish Catholic there was the added enemy of the race. And yet it was precisely the French and the Irish Catholic who knocked at his door, or, rather entered silently, fearing to announce his advent. He was a hunted exile, this Irishman, poor child of a wronged nation. The sneer and the taunt were no new things for him. He had lost heavily in the fortunes of war, but he knew his nation's history and loved even more than his life or his fortunes the faith of his fathers. He had felt the bitterness of persecution for his fidelity. But he was a human being: he had a right to live, and live he would.

"The Puritan has passed; the Catholic remained. The city where a century ago he came unwelcome he has made his own. A century has materialized a prosperity and a growth undreamed of by his fathers. The little church of Boston has grown and expanded into one of the most prosperous and numerous provinces of the Christian world. The seed planted in trial and watered with tears has grown into a mighty tree. The virtue, the strength, the beauty were all in the seed—the faith of Christ never fails to flourish when there is air and light enough and liberty to grow. Persecution but impedes it only for a while—and even while it impedes its blossoming, only strengthens the roots and invigorates the sap. The first pastor of Boston well knew this when he gave to his little church the name of Holy Cross.

"Between the Puritan and the Catholic in the beginning lay a dreadful gulf. To begin even to understand the true soul of things which happened during the past century that gulf must be explained. Until a bridge has been



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thrown across that chasm, still very deep, even if growing happily narrower, this people of New England will never live in perfect concord. The first step in the remedy of an ill is the admission of its existence. And if there is a place where this holy endeavor for harmonizing hearts is fitting, it is this place, the mother-church of this whole Province, and there is one upon whom that duty would seem to rest more than upon any other, it is upon the Metropolitan of the greatest religious body in New England.

"The child of the emigrant is called to fill the place which the Puritan has left. He must learn to fill it worthily and well. And from the story of his father's struggles he must take to heart two salutary lessons—to keep his faith undimmed and his charity unquenched. The charity of the Puritan was for his own only—the charity of the Catholic must be for all. The Puritan failed because he planned only for himself. The Catholic must broaden his love to embrace all as Christ did. He will not fail. The Puritan frowned upon the coming of the stranger, and then wondered at the estrangement which followed. Beware of a like grave fault yourself towards those who now enter your gates. Your Church is Catholic—so let your charity be also.

"No obstacles of ignorance of our faith nor antipathy to race must discourage us. The sign of the holy cross glows high before us Catholics of Boston and New England as it did upon the banners of Constantine when the Church came forth from the catacombs to take her rightful place of glory and triumph among all tribes and peoples. The procession has started; the march towards our duty here, not merely to ourselves, but to our surroundings, must proceed. God wills it—our country demands it. Let the dead past bury its dead; but not all the past is dead."

THE BLESSING OF THROATS.

On February 3rd, of each year the Church celebrates the feast of St. Blasius, Bishop and Martyr. As fifteen hundred years have already gone by since this great and holy man lived and died for Christ, we see how ancient is the custom of invoking him in throat troubles; since, so far as we can discover, the practice has been uninterrupted since the time of his death.

This custom originated in the prison where Blasius was confined on the charge of professing Christianity. While awaiting sentence his brethren the Christians, had recourse to his prayers and always with the happiest results. Among others who came to solicit his help, was a poor mother with her son, a young lad had swallowed a bone, which getting crosswise in his throat, had defied all the efforts of the medical practitioners to extract it, and what from want of nourishment, from pain and loss of blood, the boy was at the last extremity. No sooner had Saint Blasius touched his throat than the little sufferer was restored to perfect health.

Ever since then the saint has been invoked to cure sore throats, and the best proof of popular confidence is the eagerness of pious Catholics to secure his intercession and blessing on his feast.

The Church has taken up and approved this custom and blessed it with special rites and a special prayer. For us Catholics this is a seal set on our devotion to Saint Blasius. When we are with the Church we are safe, and this not only in her dogmatic teaching, but in her prayers, her rites, and her ceremonies. It is wise to be very Catholic in this respect. Surely we do not pretend to set up our own narrow personal and private judgment as a safe standard for even ourselves, against the custom and approbation of her who has witnessed the rise and fall of so many Luciferi.—The Canadian Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

THE MISSIONARY CONGRESS.

We have had many occasions to note the unsatisfactory manner in which the sermons of Catholic preachers are reported by the secular press, but the most notable instance which has ever come under our notice is the address delivered by the Rev. Francis C. Kelley at the recent Missionary Congress in Chicago. All the daily papers we read published a considerable portion of the address and in all of them it appeared the same, word for word, a sensational attack made by Father Kelley upon other Catholic societies in the interest of the Extension Society of which he is president. We knew that it might

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have a very different sound when taken as a part of the whole address, but we were not prepared for the difference which we found when the whole address reached us. Never before have we known an address to suffer so much by making an extract from it. Read in its context the sensational attack was neither an attack nor sensational. Father Kelley is a man of one idea, as many other men have been when they had a great project in hand. On that account he is disposed to belittle whatever is not grist for his mill. But his development of his idea was done in such splendid style that even those who may have been surprised at the opening of his speech must have felt like giving him enthusiastic support by the time he had finished.—Casket.

To arrive at perfection, a man should have very sincere friends, or inveterate enemies; because he would be made sensible of his good or ill conduct either by the censure of the one or the admonition of the others.—Diogenes.

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