

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF ASCENSION

MODERN PERSECUTORS

"They will cast you out of the synagogues; you, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God. And these things they will do to you, because they have not known the Father nor Me." (John xvi. 2)

Many injustices are committed in this world in the name of justice. This comes from the fact that so many have not the proper idea of God or His law, or have ill-informed consciences, or are ignorant. Prejudice and bias also play a great part in these lamentable tragedies so often enacted on the stage of the world.

It seems that the good always have been persecuted—to some extent at least—by the wicked. It is also a work of the tempter, the fallen angel. He sows discord in the hearts of men, and where love should flourish he plants hatred.

In the Old Law, persecutions were frequent, but history seems clearly to testify to the fact that in the New Law, they have been as frequent and of greater intensity. The very Master of life, the greatest Benefactor the world has ever witnessed, the kindest Friend to humanity, died at the hand of persecutors; and as He predicted, His apostles and disciples were also subjected to the cruelty of their enemies and unbelievers. Their successors—even to the present day—while marching in the Christian army, promoting and propagating Christ's religion, have been forced to face the persecutions of the ungodly. There were those who met death because of their religion—millions more who have suffered at least the insults of ill-informed, biased, and narrow-minded dissenters.

Our Divine Saviour prayed that the closest union might exist among His own, and that others outside of His fold might be called to it, so that all would be linked together by the great bond of charity. His wish, as regards His own, has had, more or less, its fulfillment, but we yet await the day when those beyond and without His one true Church will feel kindly towards her members.

To some extent, prejudice has been overcome, and it was thought by many that education would be the great corrective of this evil; but as in many other instances, the prediction has not been fulfilled. At the present day some of those who are most highly versed in the natural sciences are the most avowed enemies of the followers of the true Christ. The time may come when people will consider the question more soberly, and, from the experience of the past, learn that education of the mind alone is not sufficient to direct the heart—but with it must go moral training, religious guidance and the practice of Christian virtues.

If we can believe some of the professions of our enemies of today, it would seem that they think they are doing homage to God by persecuting the members of our Church. In their ignorance, some perhaps may be urged on by such a motive; but it is difficult to believe that many of the modern enemies of the Church feel that they are doing God's will when they are aiming bitter attacks and casting calumnious words at their Catholic neighbors. The law makes no exception between Catholics and non-Catholics; neither should they. Besides, the very presence of Catholicity in the world, manifesting itself in so many forms, and doing its work with such varied effects, should teach even the most ignorant that a religion effecting such good must have God with it. So, while in the beginning, before religion had spread over the world and its influence had been sufficiently felt, it was more easy for men to think that, by aiming destructive blows at the Church, they were doing homage to God—today, in full development of the Church, with her works ever open to the eyes of all, it is well-nigh impossible to believe that any great number of our enemies are in good faith in their vicious attacks on the Church.

The fact that we are persecuted is not what we lament most; but it is to note the lack of charity in the hearts of so many. It is, again, because we seek the wish of Christ that His Gospel, one and the same, be preached to every creature, disregarded by men. It is also because the one great force that could make men overcome and conquer their enemy is not headed by the majority of them. Nevertheless, while we regret this condition of things, and weep over it, we are not surprised that it exists. We are but poor specimens of the disciples of this Lord; and, as He said, if men persecuted Him, the Master, we must expect to be treated likewise.

There is little to be gained by battling with our enemies. More will be accomplished by good example, constant perseverance in our faith, and a never-ceasing endeavor to have the truth made known to them. Truth, after all, is the most convincing thing that we have in the world, and it will penetrate where force could never enter. It should bend the will of the most hardened sinner, and it should clear the mind of the most obstinate unbeliever. So, if by our actions and our efforts we can make the truth appear clear to men's minds, then we may look for some results to follow. From mere counter-attack, we may expect little,

if anything, of lasting and worthwhile results.

The work of the practical Catholic never can be different from that of his Master. Christ went about doing good to all, preaching the gospel of love and peace, offering violence to no one. There were many times when it seemed that He would have crushed to earth the enemies who were persecuting Him; but He deigned upon the deeds of His life, the light of His doctrine, to convert the world. So, must we—faint images of the Master—by a good fervent life and a true, convincing doctrine, plant the seeds of faith that it may grow in the hearts of a non-believing and prejudiced world.

THE BIBLE

CATHOLIC CHURCH SURPASSES ALL IN ZEAL WITH WHICH SHE PROMOTES BIBLE STUDY

Artemus Ward says: "There are some people who know many things that are not so." Among them are some non-Catholics who charge the Catholic Church with many things that are not so. We mention a few. "The Catholic Church fears and hates the Bible, and does all she can to keep it a closed book. In fact Catholics are not allowed to read the Bible."

The fact is that the Catholic Church surpasses all in the reverence which she pays to the Bible, and in the zeal and care with which she promotes its study. Before the "reformers" began their nefarious work, the Catholic Church taught the people the Bible as no Protestant church has ever done. The "reformers," instead of giving the people the Bible took it from them.

1. Pope Pius VI. (1778) wrote: at a time when a great number of bad books are circulated among the unlearned you judge exceedingly well that the faithful should be excited to the reading of the Bible; for this is the most abundant source which ought to be left open to everyone to draw from its purity of morals and of doctrine. This you have seasonably affected by publishing the Bible in the language of your country (viz., Italian) suitable to everyone's capacity." This letter has since been commonly printed at the beginning of popular editions of the Catholic Bible.

2. Pope Pius VII. (1820), urged the English Bishops to encourage their people to read the Bible, saying: "Nothing can be more useful, more consolatory, more animating, because the Holy Scriptures (i. e., the Bible) serve to confirm the faith to support the hope, and to inflame the charity of the true Christian."

3. The American Catholic Bishops assembled in council, say to their people: "It can hardly be necessary to remind you that the most highly valued treasure of every family and the most frequently and lovingly made use of, should be the Holy Scriptures (i. e., the Bible). More than any family can be found among us without a correct version of the Holy Scriptures."

4. The Catholic Church teaches that God's holy spirit is the author of the Bible and that the authority of the Bible is above that of all human reason; that consequently any discrepancy shown to the Bible by wrongly explaining it, by laughing at it, by turning it to profane uses, by throwing contempt upon it, or by attacking its sacred character, is an offense against God.

5. Opinions of Catholic saints "Love the Bible, and God's holy spirit will love thee; cherish it and it will save thee; honor it and it will protect thee." "To be ignorant of the Bible is to be ignorant of Christ." "Fall of delight is the word of God; from it everyone draws what he needs." "Let the Bible be ever in your hands, that like a shield it may turn aside the thoughts which trouble your souls." "Love the Bible and you will not love the sins of the flesh." "Read it frequently; learn as much as you can; let sleep find you with the book in your hand, and let the sacred page receive your head as it drops in sleep." "Human nature has no suffering, whether in body or soul, that does not find its solace in the Bible."

"The Scriptures are letters sent to us from heaven." The Bible changes the heart of him who reads, drawing him from worldly desires to embrace the things of God." "The earnest reading of the Scriptures purifies all things." "What page, what word of the Bible that is not the truest rule for human life?" "How sweet, O Lord, is Thy spirit which the humble and pure heart drinks in by the love of Thy Holy Scriptures."

"To think over the account given in the Holy Gospels is alone sufficient to inflame a faithful soul with divine love." The contemplations which devout authors have written on the Passion are useful and beautiful, but assuredly a single word of holy writ makes a deeper impression on a Christian than a hundred or a thousand contemplations and revelations ascribed to some holy souls, for the Scriptures assure us that whatever they attest is certain with the certainty of divine faith.

"Excuse me that I abstain from reading by saying: 'I have a trade, a wife or a family.' Thou hast all the greater need of the consolation and instruction of the Scripture tends to this: to recall us from evil through fear, to stimulate us to good through love."

"To neglect the reading of the Bible is as if we were to refuse light

in darkness, shade in the burning heat, medicine in sickness."

"The King of heaven, the Lord of angels and of men, hath sent you letters to be your wife and do you neglect to read them fervently?" Such expressions are common with all Catholic writers on the Bible.

6. Opinions of the monks. We give the opinions of the monks, because, as everyone knows, the learning of the Middle Ages was almost entirely in their hands, and because in England, up to the time of the Reformation, their monasteries covered the land and they were the great teachers of the people, both rich and poor. The monks of these houses lived according to the rule of St. Benedict, who in one chapter lays down seven instructions for leading a perfect Christian life. According to this rule, so much of the monk's day was to be spent in reading or chanting portions of the Bible in the church. A considerable time each day was to be given also to the study of the Sacred Scripture; much of it was to be learned by heart; it was to be read aloud during meals, and during their other work the monks were to think over what they had been reading. And a thousand years after St. Benedict gave his rule, a Benedictine monk wrote these words: "Two things have maintained the vigor and discipline of our order, the love of God and the study of the Bible."

"If the Catholic Church (some one may say) holds such opinions about the Bible as these, why does she not use the Bible?" Let us see what she does make of it. 1. The public prayer books of the Catholic Church are the "Breviary" and the "Mass" book. The Breviary is taken almost entirely from the Bible, and nearly the whole of the Mass book is but a reprint from the Bible, so that to read the Breviary or the Mass book is to read the Bible.

Catholic priests are solemnly bound by their profession to read portions of the Breviary daily to an amount which occupies about an hour. In our larger churches, in monasteries and convents, this is publicly chanted and occupies about two hours.

The Mass also is read daily in our churches, and not only on Sundays.

Thus you see that the Bible is never long out of the hands of the Catholic priest. Certainly the clergy of no other denomination make such frequent, such devout, such careful use of the Bible, nor among any other clergy is the daily private reading of the Bible made obligatory.

Here we may find the order that the priest may perform its sacred offices fittingly, as well as be capable of preaching God's word to the people, the Catholic Church allows no one to be ordained until he has spent some years in the study of the Scriptures, and she charges her ministers to be earnest in explaining the sacred text to the faithful.

2. The Laity. You have seen that the Mass book and Breviary are little else than the reprints from the Bible. We need not remind you that the Mass is the great public prayer of Catholics. And if you are ever present at Mass, you will see that when the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is read, the people stand and the priest kisses the book out of reverence and love for the word of God. As to the Breviary, it is a common thing for the laity to attend portions of its daily services, and before the Reformation nearly all who could read used to have copies of the gospel, or of the psalter, or of that part of the services known as the "Little Hours," and were accustomed to read these at the fixed hours of the day.

3. It is a custom with many of the laity and with all the Catholic clergy to spend half an hour a day in a form of prayer called meditation, which nearly always consists of thinking upon some portion of the Bible, and then forming upon it some prayer to God. Here are the directions for "meditation" taken from a book frequently used: "When you offer up every morning, as you ought to do, the first fruits of the day given you by God, you should select some text from the Bible. And then placing yourself on your knees if you can—and if you cannot, in some respectful attitude, before the throne of God, you should proceed to analyze this text in order to arrive at the depth of its meaning, being well assured that nothing superfluous ever issued from the mouth of God. You should then consider what rules can be extracted from it for the guidance of life. And finally, you should give vent to your feelings of confusion, compunction, fear, gratitude, joy, praise, admiration or love, concluding with humble prayer. And you should not then dismiss the text altogether from your thoughts, but keep it in your mind that you may be able, during the day, to repeat it." This is the common form of meditation among Catholics.

4. The books of private prayers in common use among Catholics such as the "Garden of Prayer," consists largely of extracts from the Bible, and the rest is saturated with the thoughts and events contained in the scriptures, even when the exact words of the sacred text are not used as in the Rosary, the Stations of the Cross, the prayers of thanksgiving.

This will be sufficient to show that the Catholic Church holds the Bible in the highest estimation as being the comfort, the safeguard, the instructor, and the delight of the soul of man, and that as containing the forms of prayer to God she has ever

made daily use of it in her public offices in the Mass, in her popular and private devotion. It is sufficient also to expose the falsehood and ignorance which accuse the Catholic Church of neglecting and despising, even of hating the Bible.—Denver Catholic Register.

SOCIALIST TYRANNY

THE OUTRAGES EXTEND FROM DESTRUCTION OF CHURCHES TO MURDER OF THEIR PASTORS

By Rev. Father A. Palmieri, O.S.A., Ph.D., D.D. Both the political and religious future of Italy depends primarily upon the defeat of Bolshevism. Russia has become the moral leader of a considerable part of Italy. This conquest, however, is not the outcome of intellectual propaganda, but of large sums of money sent to the leaders of Italian socialism.

The socialists know very well the true conditions in Russia—the tragic fate of an immense population, condemned by Bolshevism to slow death by starvation, or to a violent one by means of the guillotine, reminding us of the cruelties of Imperial Rome. The revelations of the socialist delegates that visited Russia with the staunch conviction that they would find there the Eldorado left no illusion as to the real situation of that wretched nation. But the spirit of faction, and above all the Russian gold or platinum (it is well known that the Bolsheviki sent to certain Italian socialists kitchen utensils of platinum) were more powerful than the few socialists frank enough to narrate them in good faith.

RELIGIOUS HATRED OF BOLSHEVISTS

Like Russian Bolshevism, Italian extreme socialism is impregnated with hatred of Christ, the Church, and the clergy. A few months ago I wrote in the Catholic World that the wonderful cathedrals of which Italy boasts run the risk of being destroyed by the Vandals of Bolshevism. The mysterious fire that destroyed most of the sanctuary of Loreto confirmed the truth of our forebodings. We are witnessing only the beginning of a vast and bloody persecution of Italian Catholicism. The Catholic martyrology already records several names of Italian priests and monks stricken before the altar, or in processions, brutally slain by Italian Bolsheviki.

It was said in one of our Catholic papers that persecution was the thing needed in any sense to overcome the inertia of Italian Catholics. This persecution now has come. It is not only starvation that torments the Italian clergy, most of them barely existing today on an annual salary of 1,500 lire (worth at this time but fifty dollars); it is not the insults hurled at them in villages, where they are forbidden to fulfill their duties. The fanatical atheists of Bolshevism do not hesitate to murder them. The episodes of this wild struggle between the city of God and the city of Satan are not reported regularly in the Italian press. But a report published recently by the Society for the Defense of the Clergy in the archdiocese of Bologna contains the distressing details of the incredible oppression of the Italian clergy.

INSTANCES OF BOLSHEVIST TYRANNY

The slightest pretext is sufficient for the waging of war against them. In some dioceses of the archdiocese of Bologna (which is saturated with Bolshevism) the parish churches are closed, and Catholics seeking to attend them are fined. The pastors are forbidden to hold any ceremonies attending first communions. The doors of the churches and rectories are broken. Public bakeries are not allowed to save the pastors. The clergy are forced to obey the injunctions of the socialist leagues. The closest relatives of the clergy are sought out and forced to enroll in these leagues. A priest of Bologna was unable to find anyone to carry to the cemetery the corpse of his mother, because he was suspected of having sold grapes without the permission of the league.

Beside the leagues, Italy now has "Clubs of the Anarchist Youth." Young boys are drawn within them, and instructed to lower their flags when passing churches. The members of one of these clubs went recently to the parish priest and asked him to unbaptize them. In the village of Sammarino, at the procession on Good Friday last year, the members of the local Anarchist Club followed the faithful and reviled the Saviour. At Bevilacqua, just when a procession was beginning, the socialists planted their red flags before the doors of the church and closed them. Socialist meetings are held in front of the churches in order to disturb the sacred services.

In the territory of Periceto all the sacred images and crucifixes placed in old times along the routes were mutilated or destroyed. No priests can cross that district without being insulted or pelted with stones. Those who are seen talking in the streets to priests are fined or insulted. In the village of Molinella the socialists ordered all the families to expel the priests that would dare to bless their houses on Holy Saturday. At Sammarino the pastor had bought a house for his parochial school and parish club. A crowd of 800 socialists took possession of the house and defiled it with obscene dances. The house had been bought for 20,000 lire. They offered to the pastor 10,000 lire and forced him to accept this sum to avoid grievous annoyance.

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FRIESTS FORCED TO KISS RED FLAG

In the churches of Greecchio, Badolo, Ospiate, Chicino, the socialists invaded the churches and killed two persons and wounded twelve. At Scopeto, while the pastor was celebrating High Mass last Christmas night, they occupied the church, expelled therefrom the priest and faithful and organized a dance. At Perarolo, 60 socialists forced an entrance into the church, beat the pastor, a priest of seventy years, and a notorious woman forced him to kiss a red flag. In another parish of the same province, a pastor sixty-five years old and his assistant were taken by violence from their parish, dragged in the streets with a rope around the neck, wounded and forced to kiss the socialist flag. At Lucca, a train going to Rome stopped at the station, and the conductor refused to go on until the priests on board should leave the train. For fear of a strike, the station-master could do nothing against this insulting conduct. In a word, the tactics of the socialists aim to put the clergy outside the protection of the law.

Of course, the priests ask for support from competent authorities. But according to the memorandum heretofore mentioned, the officials merely lament the lack of adequate forces, shrug their shoulders, try to minimize the outrages done to the clergy, and urge them to be patient and avoid provocation.

FASCISMO LEAGUES

The Cardinal Archbishop of Bologna has already protested against these violations of the freedom of conscience. He has denounced the intolerable conditions created by the weakness of the government in his ecclesiastical provinces. But little help will come from civil authorities. The only hope of the conservative element in Italy lies in the recent development of the Fascismo or leagues of ex-soldiers and patriots, whose ranks now comprise 400,000 men. They have decided to replace the government in the fight against socialist violence. The whole nation is in a state of latent civil war. It is to be hoped that the reaction of Fascismo, which has already furnished many victims for the cause of freedom, will check Italian Bolshevism. Otherwise the rude persecution will be visited on the clergy, and dark days fore-shadowed for Italian Catholicism.

ASK DAD: HE KNOWS

We have always believed that a boy's greatest pal should be his father. While amusing, it is a source of keen delight to hear the small boy bragging to his companions that his father "can lick" all the policemen, firemen, etc., in the wide world. It gives us an inkling of the position won by the father in the boy's affections and confidence.

Too often does the male parent neglect the opportunities which affect his progeny's future. One editor analyzes a boy's distrust for his father in the following words: "Some fathers constantly nag, find fault, and never think of praising their sons or expressing any appreciation of their work, even when they do it well. Yet there is nothing so encouraging to a boy, especially if he finds it hard to do what is right, as a tonic to youth. Boys thrive on praise. This is why most of them think more of their mothers than their fathers—because their mothers are more considerate, more appreciative, more affectionate, and do not hesitate to praise them when they do well. They are naturally more generous with them; less exacting than their fathers. I know a man who takes a great deal of pains to keep the confidence of his pet dog. He would not think of whipping or scolding him because he would not risk losing his affection, but he is always scolding his boy, finding fault with everything he does, criticizing his conduct, his associates, and telling him that he will never amount to any-

thing. Now, what chance has a boy to grow, to develop the best thing in him in such an atmosphere? You should regard the confidential relation between yourself and your son as one of the most precious things in your life, and should never take chances of forfeiting it. It costs something to keep it, but it is worth everything to you and to the boy. I never knew a boy to go very far wrong who regards his father and mother as his best friends and keeps no secrets from them."—Catholic Transcript.



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