

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. M. BOSSAERT

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOSTHOW WE MUST FORGIVE OUR
NEIGHBOR

Dear brethren, St. Peter once asked our Divine Redeemer the question, Lord, how often must I forgive my neighbor who has offended against me? Perhaps seven times? And the Lord answered, Not seven times, but seventy times seven times, meaning, whenever he offends you. Thereupon He gave the Apostles the parable in today's Gospel, to teach St. Peter, and us likewise, that we must always forgive our neighbor. This command is so important for us and we offend against it so often, that we should give it our especial contemplation.

(1) How shall we forgive our neighbor? The answer to this question, my dear brethren, is: we must forgive our neighbor in the same manner as God forgives us. When God has forgiven us our sins, in the Sacrament of Penance, He no longer thinks of them, and He treats us as though we had never offended Him. He again gives us His grace and assists us in good works, and is just as kind and generous towards us as He was before we sinned. In exactly this manner, dear brethren, must we treat our neighbor who has offended us. We must forgive him and no longer think of the offence; we must forgive the evil that he has done against us, and by no means return evil for evil. We must not remind him of his offence, nor tell others about it, and not only must we forgive the offence, but we must do good to the offender, according to the command of the Lord.

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who slander you! We must be kind and generous to them and even assist them in need. We must treat the offender as though he had never offended us. This is what truly may be called forgiveness. If we act differently, it is not true that we have forgiven, nor may we claim the reward for having done so.

(2) Our self-love will object to such a course. Our self-love will say: to forgive is quite proper, and we must have patience; however, if the offence is repeated, if there is no end to persecution and slander, we must put a stop to it. My dear brethren, this is probably what St. Peter had in mind when he asked, how often shall I forgive my neighbor who offends me? He thought that by forgiving seven times he would do quite a great deed. However, the Lord said: Not seven times, but seventy times seven times, namely as often as your neighbor offends you. Let us remember that God, in whose eyes the smallest sin is a far greater evil than we can see in the greatest offence against us, this almighty God never tires of imparting forgiveness. We go to confession and soon after fall again into sin, and yet God is ever ready to forgive again, if only we approach Him with contrition and with the purpose of amendment. How, then, can we miserable sinners presume to refuse pardon to our neighbor, who, in the eyes of God, is perhaps far better than we are? But our self-love will not agree to such a view, it says: While I will forgive my neighbor, I just won't have anything to do with him. Dear brethren, would we be satisfied if God should say to us: I will forgive you, but hereafter do not expect to be my friend! Would we not be most unhappy? Let us beware, therefore, not to propose such a thing to our neighbor. We must treat our enemies—those who offend us as friends, just as if they had not offended us. Our self-love again has another objection, it tells us: If I stand for all insults, my enemies will take me for a coward, and they will become even more abusive. Now here I would remind you that if someone unjustly does us considerable harm, we are permitted to secure the protection of the law, and it is quite proper for Christians to protect their rights and secure justice. It is not permitted, however, to let any such injury create in us an enmity for the offender. If required to take steps against someone who has injured us in any way, we must do so without passion or hatred, and seek only the justice that is due us.

There is nothing in this world, dear brethren, by which we can become more like our divine Saviour than by the forgiveness of offences. Behold Him! His enemies have abused and tortured Him, and have nailed Him to the Cross, and yet what does He do? Is He angry at them? Oh, no, quite the contrary, while hanging on the Cross in all His suffering He prays for His enemies, nay, more, He dies for His enemies, and gives His life for those who sin against Him. Let us never forget this, but if love for the dying Saviour cannot induce us to forgive, let us be moved by the threat He utters in today's Gospel: "So also shall my heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." Yes, if we forgive we shall be forgiven, but if we do not forgive, we shall not be forgiven.

Dear brethren, whenever we pray in the Our Father, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us," let us be conscious of what we pray for, namely that we be forgiven on condition that we forgive those who offend us. If

we forget the injury we have suffered from others, then may we fall down before God and pray with the servant, "Have patience with me."

And if we sincerely forgive those that trespass against us, then may we expect the Lord's forgiveness of our own sins. Amen.

A NOBLE CIVILIZATION

John C. Reville, S. J., in America

The Infinite and the finite meet in the Divine Founder of Christianity. He is God and man. Born in a stable He is the Lord of glory. Healer of all woes, He is the world's most tragic sufferer. Conqueror of death, He slumbers for three days in the tomb. Eternal and impassible, He dies in agony upon the Cross. The Church which He founded repeats in her person and in her work these Divine antinomies or contradictions. She is sealed with the marks of the power and holiness of God, yet she is the object of the world's hatred and contempt. She is the teacher of holiness and sanctity, the mother of saints, yet there are scandals among her children. She is one and unchanging, yet satisfies the yearnings of the ever-changing human heart. Her bark is ever battling with the waves of human error and passion, ever on the point of being overwhelmed, yet ever victoriously riding the storm. She bids her children lift their eyes above the things of this world, yet she is the world's great civilizer. She is not of the world, she has no mandate to foster material greatness or to further human progress in science, culture, art, but the forces of progress, of civilization, of culture and of art march yoked as willing captives to her triumphal car. The roots of such a thesis are manifold. The Middle Ages afford one that cannot be gainsaid.

The essence of civilization consists in the reign of law. Social stability, the equilibrium of the body politic are its results. Its standards are not caprice, lawlessness, passion. They are justice, order, right. Union, unity, coordination mark its presence. Disunion, mutual hostility of man to man, division, intellectual, moral and social, are a step backward towards its opposite, savagery. The presence of any civilization is quickly felt. Charles S. Devas in "The Key to the World's Progress" has marked out the signs by which civilization may be recognized; the externals of a commonwealth or city worthy of the name; some degree of political order and power; some proficiency in the industrial arts, in manufacture, agriculture, building, mining, transportation; some proficiency, too, in the fine arts, painting, sculpture, music; some rudimentary knowledge at least of philosophy, science, history; a written literature of some sort, though not necessarily fully developed; a small portion of the people differentiated as an upper class with some wealth and leisure. Some might be inclined to think that the learned economist asks too much and that scantier attainments would render a tribe civilized in the true sense of the word. But all would agree that the presence of such factors as made for union and coherence of the general body and thus indirectly affect the welfare of the individual, are essential for a civilized State. When it comes to a matter of comparison, and the question is to determine concretely where the greatest civilization has been found in the course of history, that is a difficult matter. But it can be said that in the Middle Ages, when at their height, the essential elements of civilization attained its greatest perfection.

If we take a broad survey of that epoch from the period of the First Crusade, about the year 1100, to the last of those glorious manifestations of faith down to the year 1800, we find in Europe the existence of a great Christian republic. We see Europe united, strongly bound together by the identity of religious beliefs and of political maxims. It recognized public right, a thing without which civilization is impossible, and connected that right with Christian morality, thus lifting it out of its ordinary plane and raising it to nobler heights. It did more. It knew that some interpreter of that public right and morality must exist, that the presence of the law was not sufficient, and that it must have a living spokesman. That interpreter is found and recognized in the person of the Vicar of Christ, the Pope of Rome.

The dark side of the Middle Ages cannot be ignored. It has been painted in lurid colors by friend and foe. From the Bulls and enactments of Popes like Gregory VII., Alexander III., Innocent III., Honorius IV., who were the glories of their periods and to whom they owe so much of their progress in the path of an ever-broadening civilization, as well as from the pictures drawn from "The Romance of the Rose," the tragic stories embedded in the iron verse of Dante's "Inferno," from the indictments of Guyot de Provins and the pages of Gallienne, from the popular story of every other available record we have the full tale of its weaknesses. The drama of the investitures tells us eloquently how the Church succeeded in throwing off the dominance of the secular power. The constant wars which drove the feudal lords to arms in petty and senseless quarrels remind us that the reign of force was not entirely passed. Though the brightest of all the centuries, the thirteenth, was the age of Dominic and the Poor Man

of Assisi, of St. Louis and the Angel of the schools, we know that here and there corruption lingered even in the monk's cell, that in the person of John Lackland in England, and Philip Augustus in France unkingly vices sat upon the throne. Even religion was inclined to become superstition, though the Church ever strove to put her children on their guard.

These ages were by no means an age of gold unalloyed and untainted. But the trend of the times was in the right direction. The age was not perfect. It was striving towards it. It was a rude and to some extent an ignorant age, when compared with the mental equipment of our times. But it was an ignorance which longed for knowledge and wisdom and sought for it from the true sources. The great Spanish scholar, James Balmes, in his "European Civilization" says that in looking upon those days he finds a singular character stamped upon the nations of Europe, that he does not find any symptom of death or decay. They may be, he says, "barbarous, ignorant, corrupt, but they seem ever to hear a voice calling them to light, to civilization, to a new life, and they constantly endeavor to rise from their weaknesses and to follow the summons to the nobler ideals that flash before them." Kings, nobles, men-at-arms, burghers, feudal lord and vassal, strive generously to advance in the paths of civilization. They stumble, they fall. But they strive to rise. Their eyes are set towards the light. They recognize its beams, they are neither so senseless nor cowardly as wilfully to shut their eyes to it, or to call light darkness, or darkness light. Their principles are correct. Their faith is virile.

Ideals and execution seldom go hand in hand. They did not always meet in the Middle Ages. Even here the remnants of barbarism struggled with the principles of the religion of Christ. The Crusades were the result of one of the most generous enthusiasms that ever stirred the human heart. Not only were they the outcome of the very soul of knightly duty, they were the promptings of the wisest policy, and an effort, unconscious, perhaps, but none the less genuine, towards commercial and economic self-realization. The conception was splendid. Such conceptions seldom come to an entire civilization. But the execution was marked with all the signs of human frailty and folly, by violence and jealousy, by petty wranglings among kings and barons who professed to be fighting for the Cross, yet belied its lessons by their licentious lives.

The age was one of intense intellectual striving. Few ages can boast of such teachers as Roscellinus and Abelard, William of Champeaux, Duns Scotus, Peter Lombard, Albertus Magnus, Bonaventure, Alexander de Haie, and Thomas Aquinas. But the students that crowded their lecture rooms were too often unruly, turbulent, riotous and licentious. Noble idealism still strove with barbarism and savagery. In spite of all these dark lines to the picture, the age was undoubtedly great. In some things it has reached to heights to which the human mind had never reached before and which it has vainly attempted to attain since. With all our intellectual striving, with all the resources which the modern world can command, we have not yet seen a civilization so fair and true in its outlines as that of the age of Dante and St. Louis, of the great universities, of the great cathedrals, of the glories and the common sense of Magna Charta, of the great democracy of the Monastic Orders of Dominic and Francis, days in which authority was revered and the strivings and gropings of liberty were helped by the strong hand of the greatest civilizer, the Catholic Church.

Superior in many ways to that of ancient and modern times, the civilization of the Middle Ages from the social point of view rested on the most solid and permanent foundations. It was built upon the sacredness of the family, respect for authority and personal liberty, reverence for woman, tenderness for the ignorant, the aged and the child. There were tyrants in the Middle Ages, for there were Henrys in Germany, there was a Philip in France who forgot that he had borne the Cross and then behaved like a Moslem emir, but tyranny was checked by the restraints of religion. There dwelt a priest in Rome who could overawe John and Henry and Philip with the spiritual weapons at his command and force them back to the path of duty. The Middle Ages at their height, in the days when Innocent III. was Pope, knew not the theory of autocratic rule, of unlimited authority, the Caesaristic heresy of the omnipotence of the ruler and the State. Authority was limited. It was a trust, in the Pope, from God, whose representative he was in spiritual things, and in the king, from God, too, who was the protector and the guardian of the people. In the days of Innocent III., who realized the noblest ideal of the Papacy, ideals which had been dreamed of by Gregory VII. and Alexander III., we see the highest spiritual authority in the Church, and in the Christian commonwealth the highest moral power that controls kings and nations. We do not know of any other civilization so perfectly graded, with a better organized constitution, a nobler hierarchy of powers, better balanced to carry on the great work of civilization and to crown it with all the arts of culture and progress.

If civilization be the reign of law, it was surely found when in Christendom, under the guidance of the Vicar of Christ, a whole world was united in unity of a common belief and in the submission to the same central authority. Innocent III., in whom the Papacy reached its loftiest pinnacle, never intended nor attempted to absorb in his own person the prerogatives of the temporal rulers whom so often he had to check and condemn. He was lifted by his own greatness and by the natural results of the reign of his predecessors, Sylvester II., Gregory VII. and Alexander III., to the lofty eminence. But never was power used for nobler ends. Never perhaps in history was civilization as such seated on a firmer basis. Never did its handmaid, culture, produce such noble fruits. Innocent and his immediate predecessors and followers in the chair of Peter labored for a great ideal. That ideal permeated the whole life of the period, its laws, its social institutions, the reign of its Francis of Assisi and Dominic de Guzman, of St. Louis, of the "Divina Comedia" of Dante, the "Summa" of St. Thomas and the "Journey of the Soul Towards God" of Bonaventure, the age of chivalry and of the great cathedrals and universities, of the glories and the common sense of the "chansons de geste," of Villardouin and Joinville and Etienne Boileau and Walter von der Vogelweide and Vincent de Beauvais and Roger Bacon need not be named of its achievements. It was a great civilization. The secret of that civilization it drew from the sources from which Thomas of Aquinas had drawn the secret of his learning, the Cross.

THE EUCHARISTIC APOSTOLATE

The Eucharist is the bond of unity in the Catholic world, just as it is the test of our Catholicity and the measure of our faith, hope and charity are gauged by our devotion to this glorious Sacrament, the great central dogma of our religion. Love of the Eucharist is the magnet that attracts all who wish to serve God intimately, just as the absence of this love spells lukewarmness, a state that our Lord wished to crush out of the souls of men when He revealed His Heart to Saint Margaret Mary, and when He bled her to go to communion on the First Friday of every month and as often, besides as devotion would allow. It was His invitation to her to nourish her soul with the bread of life, being well aware that her example would be in the coming centuries move others to do the same. The Eucharistic apostolate was being clearly outlined when He asked her to perform this sublime act of union with himself in a spirit of atonement for the coldness of others.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart, the symbol of our Lord's love, necessarily leads to the altar rail. It makes us share in the sentiments that fill His Heart burning with love for us on our altars; it reminds us that He deeply feels the coldness of those whom He loves; it forces us to atone in some way by the fervor of our affections and the sanctity of our lives. Listen to the tender, plaintive words which He uttered in one of His revelations to Margaret Mary, words which should move the hearts of all who have the power to feel. "Behold," he exclaimed, "My Heart which has loved men so much that it has suffered everything, has given all its treasures, and has made every effort to show its love. In return I receive from the greater number of them only ingratitude, contempt, irreverence, sacrilege, and coldness in the Sacrament of my love." Who is there so devoid of understanding that he cannot see how the loving Heart of Jesus feels our ingratitude? And who is so heartless as not to long to atone in some way by greater fidelity and fervor in His service? The Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.

RED INVASION HURLED
BACK

Responding to the prayer of the Polish millions in their deep anguish God has intervened to save Europe, for this year at least, from the peril of the red armies pouring across the borders of Russia with the intention of subjugating the world to the Bolshevik regime. In response to the call of their Hierarchy on August 8th Catholic Poland with one accord stormed the mercy seat of God to save their armies and the nation from utter defeat at the hands of the victorious Bolsheviks. A hundred thousand people, men, women and children, on this particular Sunday turned out in religious processions, reciting litanies all over what then seemed to be the doomed country. The hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers were closing in on Warsaw at the time, and there seemed to be no power great enough to stop their onward march. Trotsky, the military dictator of the red hordes, boasted that within a year all Europe would be Soviet, that the dictatorship of the Proletariat would be everywhere triumphant.

Since then, in a space of three short weeks, the entire face of the situation has been changed. The French rushed to the assistance of the Poles with arms and ammunition in abundance, the brave but discouraged sons of Poland rallied their broken ranks and with some of their priests marching at the head of the soldiers in their sacred vestments, no other weapon in their hands but the crucifix, suddenly the tide of

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battle turned and as we go to press Poland and Galicia are being cleared of the last remnants of the Bolshevik army, and the victorious invaders have been driven back in defeat and confusion across the border.

This striking reversal of the fortunes of War, coming as an immediate response to prayer, reminds us of the celebrated naval victory of the Christians over the Mohammedans at Lepanto on October 7th, 1571, which was the beginning of the end of Mohammedan supremacy on the Mediterranean, and practically ended the danger to Europe of Islam rule over the Christian states. That notable triumph of Christian valor followed immediately after the Pope had commanded the faithful throughout Europe on the First Sunday in October to turn out in processions, supplicating God and the Blessed Virgin to save Europe and has always been attributed by Catholics to the intervention of Divine Providence in response to the recitation of the Rosary on earth and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin in Heaven.

It is true that the Mohammedans returned again with a still larger fleet of ships to offer battle to the Christians the following year, nevertheless, the victory at Lepanto proved the turning point in the destinies of Europe, and let us hope that this decisive defeat of the Bolshevik forces in their attempted invasion of Poland will prove the death wound to Lenin and Trotsky's ambitions and utterly rid all Europe of the dreadful plague of Bolshevism.

which has for three years victimized Russia and cast its red shadow

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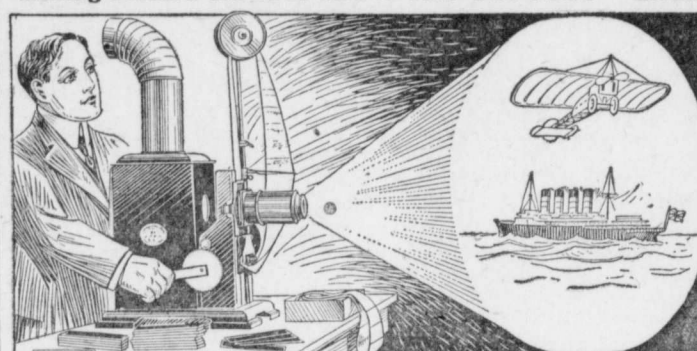
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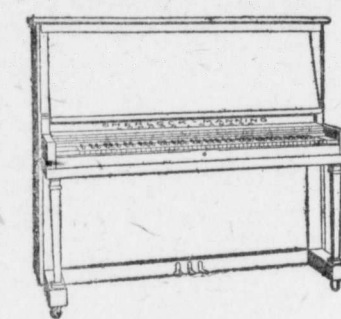
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