

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

By Rev. M. BOSSART

THIRTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

INGRATITUDE TOWARDS GOD

Jesus, Master, have mercy on us; these were the words with which the ten lepers, standing afar off, implored our Saviour's help, and they did not ask in vain, for He exercised His miraculous power and cured them...

1. In the first place we show ingratitude by failing to recognize His benefits. A grateful man thinks of all that God has done for him, and appreciates His gifts at their proper value looking up with thankful heart to the Father of light, from whom cometh every good gift...

2. Secondly, we show ingratitude by not making a good use of God's benefits. Whenever He gives us anything, He intends us to use it in some particular way; He entrusts us, His servants, with few or many talents, not that we may bury them, but that we may employ them for our good and that of our fellow creatures according to His holy will...

3. Finally, we show the basest ingratitude when we make a sinful use of God's gifts and benefits. It seems hardly credible that a reasonable being could act so outrageously, and yet it happens only too often. In their ingratitude men employ their gifts of mind and body for wicked purposes. God gives you a sound constitution, and you presume upon your strength and throw it away by yielding to drunkenness and excess...

Let us henceforth not shut our eyes to God's gifts and goodness and still less make a bad use of what He bestows upon us. Rather let us be grateful for the benefits that He showers upon us so bountifully day by day, and show our gratitude by using them for His honor and for our own good and that of our neighbors. May we impress upon our hearts St. Paul's words: "Give thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father," and may we ever practice what he teaches. Amen.

THE DEVIL WOULD WIN

District Attorney Jerome was joshing the late Cardinal Farley one day in his usual free and easy manner. "Suppose," he asked at last, "that the Pope and the devil were to litigate a cause, which do you suppose would win?" "The devil," said the Archbishop, with a malicious twinkle in his eye...

HOW TO GET RID OF RHEUMATISM

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CHURCH OF CHRIST IS INFALLIBLE

In the Gospel of Saint Luke we read: "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me." In the Gospel of Saint Matthew we read: "And if he will not hear the Church let him be to us as a heathen and a publican." In the Gospel of St. Mark we find: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned." These words plainly show that Christ demands an absolute faith in the teachings of the apostles and their successors, who govern His Church on earth. If Christ demands that we must believe under penalty of being lost, if He says that to hear the Church is to hear Him and that one who will not hear the Church must be considered as the heathen and the publican, we have a right to the assurance that this Church shall never teach error.

John Mallock, the English Protestant philosopher, says: "Any supernatural religion that renounces its claim to absolute infallibility is its clear confession to be a semi-revelation only. It is a hybrid thing partly natural and partly supernatural, and it thus practically has all the qualities of a religion that is wholly natural. In so far as it professes to be revealed, it is of course infallible; but if the revealed part is in the first place hard to distinguish, and in the second place hard to understand; it may mean many things, and many of those things contradictory, it might just as well have never been made at all. To make it in any sense an infallible revelation, or in other words a revelation at all, to us, we need a power to interpret the testimony that shall have equal power with that testimony itself."

Though the dogma that the Church is infallible in defining matters of faith and morals was not formulated until the Vatican Council, it had been explicitly taught long before and had been assumed from the very beginning without question down to the time of the Protestant Reformation. Our Protestant friends object that our proof to the infallibility of the Church is by a vicious circle. They charge that we prove the infallibility of the Church from the Scripture and at the same time base the inspiration of Scripture on the testimony of the Church. We are not guilty of a vicious circle because in establishing the infallibility of the Church we appeal to the Scripture only as purely human documents. We take them as a trustworthy report of Christ's sayings and promises. We use the Scripture as an historical source of information to prove that Christ endowed His Church with infallible teaching authority. This is not a vicious circle, but a legitimate logical proceeding. The texts from Scripture defining the commission that Christ gave to His Apostles plainly indicate that the Church could not fail in continuing the Gospel of Christ. In Saint Matthew we read: "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Note that Christ in giving this commission to His Apostles first appeals to the fullness of power that He Himself has received. This emphasizes the extraordinary character and extent of the authority that He is giving to His Church. It implies that He is giving an authority that He could not communicate were not He Himself omnipotent.

He promises to be with His Apostles and their successors to the end of time in carrying out the commission He gives to them. They are to teach in His name, and people are bound to receive that teaching as if it were His own. This can mean nothing more than that this teaching is to be accepted as infallible. The promises of Christ could not be effectively fulfilled unless the living voice of the Church could speak infallibly to every generation on any question that might arise affecting the substance of Christ's teaching. If Christ really intended to be with His Church until the end of time, if He was truly the Son of God and knew history in advance, and was able to control its course, then the Church is entitled to claim infallible doctrinal authority. When we consider the awful sanction by which the authority of the Church is supported, that all who refuse to assent to her teaching are threatened with eternal damnation, this conclusion is confirmed. We could not believe that Christ would demand an unqualified and irrevocable assent to a body of doctrines under penalty of damnation if it could be possibly false. When Saint Paul speaks of the Church as the pillar and ground of truth he certainly does not mean a Church that can teach error. He warns the Galatians to anathematize any one, even though that one were an angel from heaven, who would preach a Gospel other than that which he had preached. The Apostle makes it plain that he claimed to make every understanding captive not to any personal or private view of his own, but to the Gospel which Christ had delivered to the Apostolic body. They questioned his own authority as an Apostle and he defended his claim to the Apostleship because he had seen the Risen Saviour and received the mission directly from Him and that His Gospel was in complete agreement with that of the other Apostles. That the Apostles were conscious of a corporate infallibility is evident from the expression that was used in the decree of the Council of Jerusalem: "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay no further burden upon you." In deciding the issue, he stakes the Apostles claimed to speak in the Name and with the authority of the Holy Ghost. Men who did not believe that Christ assured them of an infallible, Divine guidance would not have presumed to speak with the authority of the Holy Spirit.

During the early centuries there was no formal discussion concerning ecclesiastical infallibility, yet the Church always acted on the assumption that she was infallible in doctrinal matters. The great orthodox teachers of the first centuries believed that the Church was infallible and those who presumed to contradict the teaching of the Church were treated as representatives of Antichrist. They were excommunicated. The letters of Saint Ignatius of Antioch indicate how intolerant he was of error and was firmly convinced that the body of Bishops was divinely ordained and divinely guided organ of truth. We remember the story of Saint Polycarp when he met Marcion on the streets of Rome and denounced the heretic as "the first born of Satan." It is said that the story is fiction, but it is in keeping with the spirit of the age, a spirit that is not compatible with belief in a fallible Church. We have the testimony of Saint Irenaeus: "Where the Church is, there also is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every grace; for the Spirit is Truth." Writing from the Catholic standpoint Tertullian ridicules the thought that the universal teaching of the Church could be wrong. He says: "Suppose now that all churches have erred. This would mean that the Holy Spirit has not watched over any of them so as to guide unto the truth, although He was sent by Christ and asked from the Father for this very purpose—that He might be the Teacher of Truth." We could multiply quotations without number that would show the indisputable fact that before the Council of Nice and after the Council of Nice all orthodox Christians believed that the corporate voice of the Church, speaking through the Bishops united with their head, had the fullness of doctrinal authority which the Apostles themselves had possessed. They declared with one voice that to question the infallibility of the Church is equivalent to questioning the veracity and fidelity of God. During the first three centuries the concurrent action of the Bishops throughout the world brought about the condemnation of heresies. When it was found expedient to assemble Ecumenical Councils, after the example of the Apostles at Jerusalem, the doctrinal decisions of these Councils were held to be absolutely final and immutable. Most of the early heresies recognized, at least in theory, the infallibility of the Church. When they refused to submit they did so on the ground that the Council condemning them was not Ecumenical or that it did not express the corporate voice of the Church. From these patent facts it must be concluded that the Church during those days in which it is acknowledged by all Christians that she possessed the pure doctrine of Christ, believed and taught her absolute infallibility in matters pertaining to faith and morals.—B. X. O'R.

THE SCAPULAR

supernatural favors do not also subtly speaking induce any obligation binding in conscience, yet the person invested with the scapular scapular was revealed to him in a celebrated vision with which the Mother of God favored him on the 16th of July, 1251, at Cambridge. Holding the scapular in her hand, she said: "Receive, my beloved son, this scapular of thy order; it is the special sign of my favor, which I have obtained for thee and for thy children of Mount Carmel. He who dies clothed with this habit shall be preserved from eternal fire. It is the badge of salvation, a shield in time of danger, and a pledge of special peace and protection." This address of the Mother of God is given in different words by different writers, but all agree substantially. The vision has been called in question by certain writers; but when it is stated that it has been confirmed by many well authenticated miracles, that Pope Benedict XIV., among others, accepted it as genuine, and that the indulgences granted by several Sovereign Pontiffs also suppose its genuineness, there is little room left for cavilling.

The word scapular, like many others, is derived from the Latin, and means the shoulder blade, or in the plural, in which it is more commonly found, the shoulders. As a garment the scapular is a broad piece of cloth, which hangs down in front and at the back almost to the ground, as may be seen in the habit of the Carmelites, the Benedictines, and some other religious orders. The scapular worn by the faithful is a symbol of that worn by the religious of the Order of Mount Carmel.

Who may be invested with the scapular? The Church not only permits but also wishes that all the faithful should enroll themselves among the devout servants of Mary, as she wishes them to make use of all the means of grace which in her liberality she places within their reach; and hence all Catholics may be lawfully and validly invested with the scapular, there being nothing in the bulls or briefs of the Sovereign Pontiffs to forbid it. Even infants who have not yet come to the use of reason may be invested; and when they attain to the years of discretion it is not necessary for them to be Church invested, or to do anything more than simply to comply with the necessary conditions for gaining the indulgences and immediately they will begin to reap these spiritual advantages.

By whom can a person be invested? By a priest of the Carmelite Order, or by any other priest duly authorized to invest with it. In this country it is customary for bishops to give all their priests the faculty of investing with the scapular. A priest who invests himself with it invests others may also invest himself.

The spiritual advantages of wearing the scapular are five-fold: those which are received during life; those received at the approach of death; those after death; the Sabbath indulgence or privilege; and the other indulgences granted those who wear the scapular.

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