

FIVE-MINUTE SERMONS. Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

MIXED MARRIAGES. From the simplest lessons of experience, my dear brethren, I think it ought to be plain enough how miserable a thing a mixed marriage is likely to be. Even if the faith and practice of the Catholic party and of the children is what it should be—which is certainly hardly to be expected—there will be great and continual suffering to them on account of the separation of the Protestant father or mother—who is all the more loved the better and kinder he or she may be—from the unity of the Church and from the ordinary means of salvation.

In fact, it can hardly be imagined how any one having a lively faith in the Catholic religion can marry a Protestant or infidel, unless under the influence of a hope that some time or other the conversion of the other party will be effected. This hope does occasionally prove not to be a vain one. There are cases, no doubt, in which a Protestant, who would not probably otherwise have turned his thoughts to the question at all, does become a Catholic by means of marriage. But the best chance to obtain such a conversion is before the marriage is entered on; and it is the duty of every Catholic who thinks of marrying one outside the Church to bring the other party over, not only in name but in fact, to the true faith. I say in fact, for unfortunately, many a non-Catholic, who has no strong conviction about religion in any way, will be willing to call himself a Catholic, and even to be baptized, in order to remove objections which may be made. Take care, then, that the conversion which is professed, is a genuine one, and not merely got up for the occasion. I have heard of a case in which the Protestant party, when his religion was urged by the priest as an objection to the marriage, which would make trouble, most cheerfully replied: "Well, father, if it would be any convenience to you, I am quite ready to be a Catholic." Such conversions are not so very uncommon, though it is not often that they let their state of mind be seen so plainly. They will sit through several instructions given to them by the priest, making no question or remark about anything which he says, that they may get through as soon as possible; and when they do get through, that is about the last of their Catholic profession, or at least of their attendance at any Catholic duties.

If, then, a conversion, and a real and true conversion, cannot be obtained before marriage, there is certainly much fear that it never will be accomplished afterward. He warned, then, in time; do not indulge false hopes in this regard; do not marry in haste and repent at leisure. I will say a few words, with reference not to Protestants, but to careless and negligent Catholics. A Catholic who is negligent of his duties has, it is true, if he keeps his faith, a recourse which the Protestant has not; he knows what to do to be reconciled with God; and he may succeed. There is then more hope for his final salvation in this way than for the Protestant; but that does not make him a better companion during life; and many of the miseries of a mixed marriage are not with, and some, perhaps, even in a greater degree, with nominal Catholics than with Protestants. If then you contemplate marriage with a Catholic, be sure to see that he or she attends to the duties required of Catholics, and has not contracted vicious and dangerous habits. Do not delude yourself with the idea that a confession and Communion must be made at the time of the marriage, and that the priest will attend to all that is necessary. For this confession and Communion may be in some cases not so very good and fervent; they may be something like what some Protestants, as I have said, go through with for convenience or necessity. No, do not leave it all to the priest, but do your own part. If the behavior of the other people before marriage is not such as becomes a Christian, both with regard to the frequentation of the sacraments and also in the matter of temperance and in others of which you are the best and indeed the only judge, it is not likely that it will be so afterward. Take care, then, before taking a step which you cannot retrace. You, not the priest, are the one to secure now the amendment of life which is so necessary. A word to the wise should be sufficient.

TALKS ON RELIGION.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

The Catholic Church is particular in speaking about the change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, to use the word transubstantiation, that is, the change of one substance into another. Protestants frequently use, to explain their theory, the word consubstantiation, that is, the Body of Christ and the Bread at the same time. And there are some others who use the term impanation, by which they signify that Christ unites the bread and wine to Himself, as in a hypostatic union. Transubstantiation contains three distinct points of faith: First, that after consecration Christ is truly and substantially present; second, that the substance of bread and wine is no longer there, but only the species; third, that it is effected by the conversion of the whole substance of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

We can hardly understand how a person of intelligence and good will can read the sixth chapter of St. John, and not be convinced of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. Some time ago a Protestant gentleman asked me to explain the Catholic doctrine concerning the Blessed Eucharist. After we had done so, he surprised me by saying, "That is exactly my belief." He said he could not understand how anybody could have a differ-

ent belief after reading the sixth chapter of St. John. We discovered, after some interrogation, that the man really believed in the Real Presence, as Catholics do. We said to him: "Your belief is certainly not the belief or teaching of your church." He replied: "Oh, yes; our people and our church believe and teach the doctrine of the Real Presence." We said that we thought he would find upon investigation that though he himself believed in the Real Presence, his fellow members and the minister did not. We told him to make inquiries, and to ask the minister what is the teaching of the church. We even said to him that there was one fact that should convince him that his church did neither believe nor teach the doctrine of the Real Presence. We said, if that of which he partook were the Blessed Sacrament, or the Real Presence, that which remained over and above after communion was still the Real Presence. This he conceded. "Then," we said, "that being the case, we would like to know if you have reflected upon what is done in your church with the particles that remain after Communion has been administered." He said that he had never given that any special thought. We said, "If your minister and your church believe that it is the Real Presence, there would be some provision made for its becoming preservation. But in your church that which remains after communion has been administered is handed over to the domestics in the kitchen, the same as the remnants of any other meal. That ought to convince you that your minister and your church do not believe in the Real Presence. In the Catholic Church we have golden vessels in which the Blessed Sacrament is preserved, and no one but the priest is permitted to touch the Sacred Species, and the utmost care is taken in conserving the least particle of the Blessed Sacrament. A light always burns before His royal presence."

After a few days he returned and said: "I spoke to our minister concerning the Holy Eucharist, and the belief of the church in the Real Presence. I am sorry to have found that neither the minister nor the church believes or teaches the doctrine of the Real Presence. Instead of transubstantiation, in which I believe, our church appears to teach consubstantiation." We recalled to his mind the declaration he had made concerning his own faith in the Real Presence, and we asked him what he was going to do now, when he found himself entirely at variance with the teachings of his church. He became very thoughtful and sad, and he said: "I can see very well that logically I should belong to the Church that teaches transubstantiation, in accordance with the declaration of our Lord Himself. But what am I to do? My people are all Protestants, my business associates belong to the same church, and nearly all my customers belong to the same denomination. By becoming a Catholic I will estrange myself from my family, my friends, and probably will lose most of my business." We reminded him that Scripture tells us: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me," and again, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and only the violent bear it away." We said, "You should be glad of the faith that God has given you, because faith is a gift from God Himself, and you should not sell your birthright for a mess of pottage, but rejoice and be glad that you have received this divine gift. If you have found the pearl of great price spoken of in the Scriptures, should you not be willing to sacrifice all you have in order to possess it?" We are pleased to state that he took this advice, went under instructions, and to-day is a devout Catholic.—Catholic Universe.

PURGATORY.

We are accustomed to devote the month of November to the thought of Purgatory and to special prayers for our beloved dead. It is right that we should do so, and it is also a great consolation for Christian souls thus to be able to repay our debts of love and gratitude to parents, friends, teachers, who did us good on earth, and to whom now our earnest prayers, and our Holy Communion, and the great sacrifice of the Mass, can bring relief. But let us bear in mind that our own purgatory may be shortened or lengthened by our own manner of living here and now. A little patience, a little charity, a little self-sacrifice, a little humility, practised here, will help to pave our way to heaven. How can we tell what is the thickness of the barrier that lies between us now and the dead we love and whom we long to see? How do we know that they are not very near to us in spirit, watching all we do, and wondering at us because we are so foolish as not to serve God and to love Him here with every faculty of our being? We know well how once our mothers watched us, to guard us from all evil, in our cradles and our childhood, and how their prayers followed us in our grown manhood and womanhood, and how they delighted in our successes and grieved over our failures. But consider a moment. On earth, our mothers could be moved by mere human affection, by pride, by ambition. Now such motives have no influence with our dear dead as all; they gauge everything by God's measures, they weigh everything in His balances. God's glory is the one idea that possesses the holy souls; they ask one thing for their children, and that thing is that we may be holy, may do God's will alone, may be numbered with His saints. Could we hear them speak, they would ask not only prayers and applications for themselves, but they would beg us to live as we shall wish we had lived when we see God face to face at death.—Sacred Heart Review.

St. Gertrude once heard these words in a vision: "My child, there are many more saved than thou thinkest for. I condemn no one who does not willfully resist My grace."



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ALL SOULS' MONTH.

Antiquarian Casket. If we consider the processes of human justice, we see that it punishes different offences with different degrees of severity; it sometimes abstains from instituting any legal proceedings against one who voluntarily goes into exile; it sometimes commutes a sentence of capital punishment already passed into a sentence of imprisonment for life, because of a petition for mercy; it sometimes shortens the term of imprisonment because a petition has been presented on the prisoner's behalf.

Now, human justice and law are based upon the justice and law of God, who punishes mortal sin with eternal punishment and venial sin with temporary punishment; who sometimes inflicts no punishment on him who punishes himself; who sometimes commutes the eternal punishment, which was due, into temporary punishment; who sometimes shortens the term of temporary punishment, because of a petition beseeching Him to do so. We are all criminals in the eyes of God, all worthy of some punishment. The saints are those who voluntarily punished themselves to such a degree that God required nothing more from them and they went straight to heaven after their death. For those who have not done this, the only hope is that the eternal punishment which they have deserved may be commuted into temporary punishment. This is why we assume that all those who depart this life, after having come to the use of reason, are in purgatory, unless the Church has declared them to be in heaven by enrolling them in the calendar of saints. We take it for granted that they are serving a term of imprisonment, how long a term we do not know. But we do know that their term may be shortened, if we who are in this life send up a petition on their behalf. For the Church, in teaching us that there is a purgatory, a place where some souls suffer for a time before they can go to heaven, also teaches us that these souls may be assisted by our prayers, and especially by the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Again their position may be regarded as imprisonment for debt, which if some kind friend will pay in whole or in part, the prisoner may be released at once or at least their term of imprisonment may be considerably shortened.

Belong still children of God and members of the true Church, they share in the communion of Saints, and the Scripture says that it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins. That portion of Scripture in which these words are found is the Second Book of Maccabees, which we believe to be the Word of God or the same authority on which we believe the Book of Psalms to be the Word of God, namely, the authority of the Church which Christ our Lord commanded us to hear. But even those who do not believe Second Maccabees to be the Word of God must admit that it is a trustworthy account of certain events in the history of the Jewish people, which shows that they believed in prayers for the dead. And our Saviour, who so vigorously denounced the captious which had crept into the teaching of the Doctors of the Law, never said anything against the custom of praying for the dead. Rather did He use words Himself which can have no meaning except that some sins are forgiven after the soul departs from this world.

It is not necessary to argue this point with Catholics. We all believe in purgatory and in prayers for the dead. The question is, do we put our belief into practice? Let us ask our-

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solves this question at the beginning of the month of November. There are many who are very good at attending wakes and funerals, but are seldom found in Church when Mass is being offered for the repose of the souls of their deceased friends. Yet we have the very highest motives for practising devotion to the Holy Souls. In the first place, we can, as it were, do God a favor by hastening the entry into heaven of those souls whom He loves so tenderly, but whom His justice obliges Him to keep at a distance from Him until they pay the last farthing. "Amen, amen, I say to you, you shall not go from thence till you have paid the last farthing." Have we never known a father gladly abandon his intention to punish his child, at the request of a third party? His love had wished to do it, but his sense of justice had restrained him. And, if we who are evil know how to give good gifts to our children, much more will our Father in heaven give good gifts to them that ask Him. The entry into heaven of the souls in purgatory will give God an increase of external glory, that is, of praise and worship. Can we say that we love God if we refuse to procure Him this?

In the second place, we can help our brethren who are in the sorest need. They are utterly helpless of themselves and they may well exclaim in the words of Job, "Have pity on me, at least you my friends," for the hand of the Lord hath touched me. It may be a father or a mother, a sister or a brother, a husband or a wife, a son or a daughter, or a very dear friend who needs our help. It may be that they are suffering for sins which were the occasion of their committing. In the case of parents, it may very well be that through excessive love of us they neglected chastise us as they were bound to do. It may be on account of sins of anger to which we provoked them by our undutiful conduct. It may be because of unpaid debts which they incurred on our account. All the more reason that we should do something for them now. We are the only ones they expect anything from; we are the only ones who can help them.

In the third place, we owe it to our own souls to help the souls in purgatory. If they get to heaven the sooner for our prayers, we may be sure that God will let them know it, and then they will be grateful. Some people seem to be afraid of offering their Communion or prayers or almsdeeds or Masses for the souls in purgatory, saying that they need what-*ver* benefit is in short for themselves. These are sorely-sinners. They do not see that by helping the souls in purgatory they are doing a work of charity most pleasing in the eyes of God, and therefore most beneficial to themselves. They may be sure they will lose nothing by it. Moreover, when praying for the souls in purgatory, our minds naturally dwell upon their unhappy state, and we cannot help saying: "How much better for them if they had done penance in this life. A little suffering here is worth a great deal in purgatory." Then, perhaps, we shall begin to pray, "Send me here my purgatory;" or at least we shall cheerfully accept in the spirit of penance whatever suffering comes to us. Again, the thought will naturally arise: "How God must hate sin, when even the just whose mortal sins are forgiven must still be purified by fire before they can be admitted to His presence!" Then we shall feel a horror and hatred of sin creeping over our own hearts, or at least we shall pray to God to give us the grace of contrition more perfectly than ever before, and firmer resolutions to avoid sin for the future.

These are some of the benefits to our own souls of the devotion to the souls in purgatory. But the full benefit we shall never know till that awful moment when we shall stand before the judgment seat, trembling in uncertainty as to whether we are saved or lost. How sorely we shall hunger and thirst, how hungry or thirsty, or naked or in prison? And then our Blessed Lord will point to certain of the bright beings standing at His right hand, and will answer: "When these My brethren were in the prison of purgatory, hiring there for the heavenly footstools, hungering for the sight of their Father's face, you visited them by your prayers. Now they are clothed with glory and drink of the waters of eternal life. Amen. I say to you, what you have done to the least of these My brethren you have done to Me. Come, blessed of My Father, possess the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."

The beautiful souls of the world have an art of wisely alchemy, by which bitterness is converted into kindness, ingratitude into benefits, insults into prayers. And the transformation ought to become so easy and habitual that the lookers-on may think it spontaneous, and nobody give us credit for it.—Henri Frederic Amiel.

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Advertisement for The Catholic at Heart. Text: "Says the Catholic Sentinel: 'We often hear it said of a man—generally a man who amounts to something in the world's eyes, that he doesn't practise his religion, but he is a Catholic at heart. But, is this correct? Is a man really Catholic at heart who does not care enough for the Church to keep him inside of her very liberal law? Does this 'Catholic at heart' remain away from confession because he is wrongfully in possession of property for which his confessor would exact just restitution; or is he guilty of some grosser form of immorality which he expects to repent of in his old age or upon his death bed; or is it just plain indifference which keeps him from complying with the precepts of the Church? when we ponder these things can we conclude that 'the Catholic at heart' who does not practise his religion has anything to be proud of? Is the title really a title of praise, and not, rather, one of dishonor?'"

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